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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS ON THE L TRAIN
SHUTDOWN MITIGATION PLAN**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Alright, we're going to get started. We're going to be joined by some of the elected officials who represent the community, in just a few minutes, but let me start by saying this. The whole idea of the City Hall in Your Borough weeks is to focus on the needs of people in neighborhoods all over the five boroughs and to make sure that our City government is never disconnected from its own people.

And let's be clear, if you're just sitting in an office in Manhattan all the time you cannot fully hear what people are feeling. I can attest to that. It has been I think 55 town hall meetings I've done now and we've done numerous City Hall in Your Boroughs, and they really give you a lot of perspective. It's important to come out here and talk about the L-train shutdown.

This is truly on the minds of Brooklynites. I have talked to a lot of Brooklynites and obviously a lot of Manhattanites as well about what this is going to mean for them, and people are really focused. They're really nervous. They want to make sure that the sheer magnitude of what's going to happen here is being acknowledged and acted on, and I'm here today to say, we got you.

We're on this. The City of New York, our Department of Transportation, is focused every day on preparing for the L-train shutdown. The MTA is as well. We're working very, very closely with the MTA in a very productive manner to get ready for this shutdown. Now, literally we – when I was on the train coming over here on the L-train – heard from one of my constituents, a Brooklynite, who wanted to know how this is going to work, what it's going to mean for me? That's the question we're getting everywhere.

We're telling people upfront this is a very big deal. This is going to cause some real dislocation but we're going to make sure there are plans in place to make sure people can get around. It's not going to be easy. It's not going to be quick. It's going to take 15 months but I can say with assurance people will be able to get around.

This is going to be – and it's a question of magnitude – one of the biggest transit projects, one of the biggest disruptions of existing transit service we've ever been through. This line was really damaged by Sandy. There was real work that has to be done but it must be done so that the L-train can work in the future for everyone.

And I think New Yorkers understand that. They understand that sometimes it's better to just get the job done once and for all so that the future can work for everyone. This is a very, very busy line – legendarily busy.

This line has gotten more and more crowded over the years. At this point, 400,000 rides daily on the L-train and 225,000 of those rides cross the East River which is obviously the part that is deeply affected.

So, we know this is going to change people's lives while it's happening. We know commutes will take longer. People will lose some time with their families and the things they care about the most. We know it's going to put a strain on local businesses. None of that is easy but we also know that New Yorkers are tough and resilient and adaptable and that we will find our way through this.

Now, one of the most important points here is that people were asked back in 2016, what was their preference? To see these repairs play out part of the time over a longer period of time or get it done all at once?

We got a really clear answer. It didn't surprise me one bit. New Yorkers want to get the job done. They'll live with 15 months of inconvenience to make sure that this is fixed once and for all. So, what are we going to do to make sure that people can get around?

Well, the number one thing we're going to do is put on a lot more buses. These are Select Bus Service buses so they move quickly. There will be 80 Select Buses crossing the bridge each hour. That means about 30,000 people a day can go on them.

We're also making major changes in some key parts of the route. Obviously, a lot will happen at 14th Street in Manhattan, but right here on Grand Street there are going to be major changes to make sure that people can get around and keep things flowing. It's clear that Williamsburg, East Williamsburg, Bushwick are the areas that are going to be hit the most. So, this is where we have to make sure we're ready. And we're going to do that with these street changes, we're going to do that with those buses, we're also going to do it with ferries.

We're working closely with the MTA on increasing ferry service so L-train riders can use our ferry landings that we now have as part of NYC Ferry. We're certainly going to be encouraging people to use their bicycles and we're adding more dedicated bike lanes. That's going to be a really good option for a lot of people in this community.

Citi Bike is going to play an important role. We already have the biggest bike share program in the entire nation. That will be expanded now by ten percent more. And for the first time those pedal-assist bikes will be part of the lineup. We've got a pedal-assist fan here.

All of these things are going to help to give people alternatives. We're also taking a lot of steps to ease congestion and to protect pedestrians in the meantime. And as I said, we got to think about the small businesses too. So, there will be help for them particularly making sure they have dedicated parking areas and loading areas so that this disruption does not hit their bottom line too hard.

So, it will be tough. It's going to take a lot of work, a lot of coordination. We have a plan we believe in but we're also going to be ready to make adjustments once we see how things work in action.

But I can say that we're not going to leave anyone behind. This is the whole idea behind this administration. We believe in fairness. We want to make sure everyone is heard, everyone is respected. We're not going to forget any neighborhood. We're not going to forget any New Yorker who needs to get around.

And it's literally a case of respecting the fact that if we aspire to be the fairest big city in America, we cannot let any New Yorker be stranded by the L-train shutdown. We got to make sure that people have the options they need and that we give them the information we need to make it work.

Just a few quick words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

Again, we are not going to let people be isolated, be disconnected in their own city. With that, so much of the work of planning and preparing has fallen to Commissioner Polly Trottenberg and her team. We've been talking about this for many months, and one thing I can say for sure, this is like so many things happening in New York City. Planning has been going on for a long, long time getting ready for that day in April so we will be ready.

My pleasure to introduce Commissioner Polly Trottenberg –

[Applause]

Commissioner Polly Trottenberg, Department of Transportation: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. And actually you're forgetting, we've been talking to you now about this for a couple of years.

Mayor: There you go.

Commissioner Trottenberg: And that is how long the planning has been going on and as you said we have worked really closely with the MTA to, I think, come up with the most robust set of plans we can. And I want to thank you, Mr. Mayor, and some of your colleagues for the leadership that you've provided.

The challenge is epic. As you've said, the L-train, if it were a standalone transit system, it would be the tenth largest in North America. And accommodating those folks from here in Brooklyn, making sure they can get to work and where they need to go, and making sure on the Manhattan side that we balance all the impacts of bringing so many people to the surface is the challenge we face.

I think we've had a terrific partnership with the MTA and we're going to continue to work throughout this process to do everything we can to minimize the inconvenience to New Yorkers. Thank you.

[Applause]

Mayor: Thank you very much, Polly. Well, I've been spending a lot of time with Council Member Antonio Reynoso lately in your district. We had a great bill signing just a few days ago. I know you've been all over this question and raising the concerns of your constituents to all of us in the administration. So, my pleasure to introduce the man who represents where we are standing right now, Council Member Antonio Reynoso.

[...]

Mayor: Alright, thank you very much. We're going to take questions about the L-train shutdown and the work that's being done here on Grand Street and elsewhere to prepare for it. Then, I want to talk about some other news of the day, and then we'll take questions on other topics. But first, anything related to the L-train itself?

Yes?

Question: Mr. Mayor, in front of the cameras, do you vow to take full responsibility for the success or failure of the plan on day-one?

Mayor: Again, I just said it before, I'll say it again. We have a plan that we believe will work. A lot of work has gone into it at DOT and at the MTA, and we're ready to make adjustments if there's anything that needs work. But in terms of the level of preparation, the years of preparation that have gone into this – I feel it's the right plan to help people keep moving.

Go ahead –

Question: You mentioned the Citi Bike – here actually at the eastern border of the Citi Bike zone, are you committed to expanding Citi Bike into a wider area?

Mayor: Well, we've already been expanding, but let me have Polly speak about the details.

Commissioner Trottenberg: As you know, Gersh, we have, first of all, work to do with Motivate. We're doing a lot of infill to put more bikes in stations into Williamsburg and Manhattan. They're going to have a pedal-assist shuttle to go over the Williamsburg Bridge, and we are looking at where we're going to go next, potentially deeper into Bushwick to expand that area. So yes, all of those things will be on the table. We've unveiled some of them and are working through the next part.

Mayor: Yes?

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Of this press conference? To tell people in the communities affected that the City of New York is ready and that they will have ways of getting around. I think that's what people want to know and, again, part of why we do City Hall in Your Borough is to hear community concerns but also to respond to community concerns. We're all hearing this all of the time –

what's going to happen? How is it going to work? We want to keep telling people and keep telling them, here are the ways we're preparing for it, here's what it's going to look like, here's what your options are going to be, and I think that's important to people – to hear that early and often.

Yeah?

Question: I have two questions. One is about the ferries, you said there's going to be more ferries, but when are you going to be announcing the increase and can you assure people that there will be enough capacity when they're already crowded now when the L-train is running at rush hour? And the other question –

Mayor: Okay, let's stay on that first, we'll take the second one after. So, I want to start by saying, we know we are up against a big challenge, so to replicate what the full L-train service provided, we are providing a lot more buses, we're providing the ferry service, we're trying to make it easier for people to bike. Obviously, a number of people will take other train lines if they live farther out. It's an imperfect series of pieces, but we think it's going to add up and give people good options. So, in terms of the ferry specifically, this is new service in addition to the service we already have. Polly can speak to you about what it looks like so far.

Commissioner Trottenberg: And just to be clear, the MTA is running this service. They're working with EDC on it. And ferries, by their very nature, the dock capacity is not that large, so it's not going to be a huge piece of the puzzle – probably carry five percent – and particularly I think it'll be focused on people who live near the Williamsburg waterfront. So, it's, as the Mayor said, one piece of a much larger puzzle.

Question: Is there a set – like, you said there's going to be 80 buses an hour. Do we know yet how many ferries and what the capacity will be [inaudible]?

Commissioner Trottenberg: You know, I'll get that to you. I think eight ferries an hour – I just got it from my team.

Mayor: Is that the signal you got from –

Commissioner Trottenberg: That's the secret signal.

Question: [Inaudible]

Commissioner Trottenberg: It's going to go from Williamsburg over to Stuyvesant Cove at 20th and Avenue C.

Question: My other question though was about the Uber cap, the ride-share legislation. A lot of people in these neighborhoods say – are worried now that, you know, with the cap on Ubers, that the timing of this was not right because they're planning to use Via's or Lyft lines. I know there's HOV restrictions on the bridge, but a lot of people in this neighborhood feel like that's a really bad move coming at this time when the train's about to shut down.

Mayor: Well, first of all, there are HOV restrictions on the bridge, and that's a central point in this, we want the focus on the bridge to be mass transit and vehicles that are carrying the maximum number of people. But as I said, what I think has been the missing link in this whole discussion – the for-hire vehicles – is if our studies show that 40 percent of the time these vehicles are going around empty, we've got a whole lot more supply than we have demand. I've said very bluntly, that is a strategy by Uber and the other companies to flood the market – Uber in particular – to try and dominate the market. It's not helping people to have a lot of empty vehicles around. There's clearly capacity, and if some more capacity is needed over here, those supply and demand dynamics will, I think, lead to that happening.

Yes?

Question: Cyclists and bus riders, they complain about blocked bus lanes, blocked bike lanes all of the time now. Why should they believe that when this shutdown takes effect that all of a sudden the new bus lanes, the new bike lanes that you're putting are going to be [inaudible]?

Mayor: Look, we are really emphasizing clearing bus lanes and clearing bike lanes. It's a big city, it's a complicated city, it's never going to be perfect, but certainly to all of the agencies involved, the idea is to enforce and keep those lanes clear. And in the context of a situation that is urgent, like the shutdown of an entire subway line, we'll be doubling down on enforcement in those areas.

Do you want to add?

Commissioner Trottenberg: I'll just add and say we will have camera enforcement of the bus lane on 14th Street. We're trying to make as much of the bike infrastructure really segregated from cars. And, I think, as the Mayor said, we have also been working now for many, many months with NYPD to come up with the best possible enforcement protocols that we can.

Question: Commissioner, will the other bus lanes have camera enforcement? And if not, how will you ensure – specifically on Grand Street, how will you ensure that traffic [inaudible]?

Commissioner Trottenberg: We will have cameras on Grand Street and on 14 Street. And look, you've heard the Mayor say, it's a big challenge but we all recognize the urgency, particularly also for the L-buses that are going to be snaking up to connect to the subway lines in Lower Manhattan. We just did a bus ride with a lot of elected officials and really took a hard look at making sure we need to keep the lanes clear for those buses.

Question: Is congestion on the other bridges as a result of the HOV a concern?

Mayor: I'm sorry, I'm just going to interrupt you for a second because I want you to hear the second piece of that answer. I want to emphasize, this is seven-eight months away now – there's going to be a war-room dynamic to this, and we're going to have to make a lot of adjustments. If we need more enforcement, we're going to do it. If we need more personnel, we're going to do it. If we need to run more buses than it's possible to – whatever it takes to make things work. Now, what happens in a lot of these situations – if people are constantly warned of what's coming, they end up making adjustments of their own. So, I hope and I pray that our projections are more dire than what happens in the end, but this is going to be game-on. We're all going to

be focused and making whatever changes we need. It's not a question of resources, this is a huge area of focus for all of us. And if the Commissioner says she needs something to keep things moving, she's going to get it.

Go ahead, what was your second question?

Question: My second question was – I mean, you more or less answered it – but if the HOV restrictions – is there any question about them leading to spillover traffic on the other bridges? And how are you planning to handle that?

Commissioner Trottenberg: I think we're really hoping – and you heard the Mayor say it – through strong messaging – and many of you have heard me say this in the past – we're going to discourage you as being a single occupant vehicle driving into Manhattan during this challenging 15-month period. We're hoping that will encourage a lot of people to use the other modes – the buses, the bikes, take a subway from another part of Brooklyn or Queens, if they're coming from Queens. Right now, we're going to focus on getting the Williamsburg Bridge working. Again, we'll have to see. If we see tremendous traffic impacts at the other East River Bridges, we'll have to tackle that either through enforcement or come back and have further discussion about whether we need to do something stricter there.

Question: If I'm getting off the train here at this stop and I want to get to 14th Street, how many minutes should I expect it to take?

Mayor: I don't think we have an exact projection for you, give us a little time on that one. But everyone – look, we're going to say it now, in August the year before, and we'll say it all throughout the lead-up – people are going to need to leave more time to get where they're going. And the Councilman just said, the first weeks are going to be an adjustment period for everyone, and then we're going to get a sense of what's working and what adjustments, but that's going to be true for people. Again I think every day New Yorkers, they are not shocked at the notion that there was a natural disaster that affected this tunnel and now it needs to be fixed and there's going to be disruption. Most New Yorkers actually handle this stuff really, really well and they make their adjustments and they go on with their life. Our job is to make it as easy as we can for them. Yes.

Question: Mayor, you talked about the war room mentality –

Mayor: A little louder?

Question: You talked about the war room mentality –

Mayor: Yes.

Question: [Inaudible] shutdown. Can you speak about the cooperation that happened there [inaudible] problems in the past with [inaudible].

Mayor: Yes, on this there has been tremendous cooperation so you know, I think it's interesting that two organizations that sometimes don't see eye to eye can get on the same page particularly in an urgent situation and that's what's happened here for sure. Everyone I have talked to from

the MTA, most recently Andy Byford, about this was on the same page with us. We've made clear we are going to do everything that we can do. Everyone is taking it as a big, big challenge so you know sometimes the problem Grace, is when people minimize the challenge and try and explain away. Boy this is the exact opposite. Everyone is saying this is unprecedented. It's going to be a huge impact and we are going to need everything we got. But I can tell you honestly I have not felt there is any daylight between us and the MTA on how to approach this. Any other questions on the L train shutdown and what's going to happen here on Grand Street? Going once, twice – okay. Let me say something before we take other questions.

So a number of you have heard me say that probably the most formative experience for me when I was growing up in terms of understanding the world around me was the Watergate hearings and then later the resignation of President Nixon. And that time changed this nation fundamentally but it also showed that our system works and that there were real restraints even on the President of the United States. I can only tell you, I cannot remember since 1974 a day like today where the former campaign manager of the President of the United States is convicted and the President's personal lawyer plea bargains on the same day. And clearly in the case of Michael Cohen, that plea points directly at President Trump. This is a plea related to violation of campaign laws. And we all know now that those conversations directly involve the President. I am not foreshadowing what's going to happen next. I don't know if it will be the same outcome as befell President Nixon. I am saying I don't think we've seen a day like this since the end of the Nixon presidency. And once again it shows that our judicial system has provided some real consequences, even to some of the most powerful people in this country and people who worked literally at the right hand of President Trump. So a lot is going to change as a result of today, a lot more dominoes are going to fall. And that's before you even talk about the possibility of the Mueller investigation finding collusion with the Russians. So we are living in an even more powerful time than I think we realized. And it's going to test our democracy. But today's results show the strength of our institutions and show that our democracy is working.

Want to see if there are any questions on that or anything else? Anyone on anything, go ahead.

Question: I'm curious, this originally wasn't a planned Q-and-A, what made you change your mind given the magnitude of what's going to happen now?

Mayor: Because of the questions related to this, we thought it was important. There's been so much concern, to take the questions and continue the process of public education around it.

[Inaudible]

Mayor: Hold on a second please, go ahead.

Question: I have two questions –

Mayor: Yes.

Question: As you know, the gubernatorial candidates are going to debate about a week from now next week. I wonder as a voter, what question [inaudible].

Mayor: Hold on they are trying to interrupt you. I heard they are debating?

Question: The Governor and the gubernatorial candidate, the democrats are debating next week – as a voter what would you like to ask Cynthia Nixon?

Mayor: I would like to ask both candidates, hold on. We are working together here Marcia, let's get the sound interference out of the way. As a voter and a citizen I want to ask both candidates, how are you going to fix Albany because the status quo in Albany is not working. The corruption continues – what are you going to do differently?

Question: A follow up to that?

Mayor: Sure.

Question: [Inaudible] answer, what would your follow up question be when they say – I mean, one guy said he was going to fix Albany eight years ago and hasn't done it yet and you have another person who doesn't know anything about Albany.

Mayor: Well again, I'm going to contest you on the second point. As you know I have not taken a position in this race and I'm considering it and I'll say what I feel when I feel the time is right. But we have to be clear I've known Cynthia Nixon for a long time – she has been fighting important battles in Albany, she knows a lot about how Albany works and she has been fighting for parents and students, sometimes victoriously and sometimes seeing how broken the place is and what needs to change. But look the bottom line to both candidates is something different, something radically different has to happen in Albany. How are we going to end corruption? How are we going to get laws that actually encourage people to vote rather than discourage them? How are we going to get campaign finance laws that do not allow big money to flood the political process? Right now in Albany, you name it, it's broken. So I think you know both of them are going to be challenged to provide a believable answer.

Question: [Inaudible] endorse in this race?

Mayor: Again I'm weighing my options and I know it's getting late in the election. I'm going to be making a decision soon.

Question: Is that about endorsing for – I'm wondering about the AG race –

Mayor: Yes.

Question: Is that what the question was about?

Mayor: No it was about the governor's race but it's the same answer. I'm considering all options, all options are on the table and I will be speaking to it soon.

Question: Before the primary?

Mayor: Yes before the primary, whatever I decide – to get involved or not get involved in all of these cases it will be before the primary.

Question: If you decide to not get involved, you'll announce that as well?

Mayor: I will announce whatever I do. Yes, involved, not involved, the whole thing. I will tell you.

Question: Not related, but you were tweeting, the President tweeted at you earlier today, you responded and recently he's been tweeting at the Governor, anything we should read into this act?

Mayor: I think we should read into that the President is not doing his job if he is so busy tweeting at people because he has minor disagreements like what their slogan is. That one was the strangest thing in the world to me because promises made, promises kept, I've heard a hundred different leaders use that one. He didn't coin it for God's sakes. But why does he even have the time to worry about it. He's supposed to be the leader of the free world – I find it kind of troubling that this is what he puts his time into. But maybe it is a distraction from his other problems of the day. No, the bottom line is we are trying to get things done and it's just a strange use of the President's time. Okay, thanks, everyone.

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