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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON FOX 5'S GOOD DAY NEW YORK

Rosanna Scotto: New York City is suing the nation's largest opioid makers for half-a-billion dollars.

Lori Stokes: The deadly epidemic kills hundreds of New Yorkers every year. Mayor Bill de Blasio is joining us now to talk about his new strategy which he has announced as well as other important issues that are facing New Yorkers.

Mr. Mayor, thanks for being back with us –

Mayor Bill de Blasio: You're very welcome.

Stokes: So soon since last time. Happy New Year to you.

Mayor: Happy New Year.

Stokes: We know you're heading to the nation's capital a little later today to talk with the President but we wanted to also just at least start talking about the opioid crisis and your war against big pharmaceutical companies, eight of them of which you have already targeted in this \$500 million lawsuit. Let's talk about specifics – why you thought it was time to do this.

Mayor: Look, these companies systematically hooked America on drugs that we really didn't need and that's the bottom line. Hundreds of millions of prescriptions a year at the high point, and what that's meant for New York City is we've literally lost thousands of people. The opioid makers systematically tried to convince people that there was not a danger, that you could use these drugs for all sorts of different situations not including the ones that they were originally supposed to be used for. What did it mean?

It meant a vast crisis, an epidemic which has touched every borough and families are grappling with this every day –

Stokes: You've heard from some families, correct?

Mayor: Everywhere I go. Everywhere I go. Yesterday we had a woman with us, Ann Marie Perrotto from Staten Island. Staten Island has been very hard by the opioid crisis. And her son got a minor injury, went to the doctor. She said in the end it could have been Tylenol the doctor prescribed. Instead the doctor prescribed opioids. Her son tragically got hooked despite every effort of the family to get him off. They lost him.

And this has happened over and over again in our cities. So, here's what we say, these companies knew what they were doing. In the name of profit, they sold a drug that was dangerous and they hyped it and they convinced people to use it more and more. We're going right at them. We're going to sue them. We want the money to be able to protect people and to stop these companies from doing what they're doing.

Stokes: To be fair, we should read from at least of the companies. Teva, which has said that, "Teva is committed to the appropriate use of opioid medicines. We recognize critical public health issues impacting communities as a result of illegal drug use as well as the misuse and abuse of opioids that are available legally by prescription." Purdue says, "We vigorously deny these allegations. We look forward to the opportunity to present our defense." This has been done before. Chicago did it in 2014. What's going to be different this time?

Mayor: Lori, it's interesting, Purdue, they already have paid hundreds of millions of dollars in fines having admitted some of these charges already and cities all over the country are getting together her to say we're going to really break the back of this just like what happened with tobacco.

Remember the tobacco companies used to be pushing their product. Remember all those tobacco ads on TV and everything. Cities sued them, stopped that advertising, changed behavior, got a lot of resources back to fight smoking. That's one of the reasons the level of smoking has gone down and we've saved so many lives.

We've got to do that with opioids too. These guys are very, very clear about what they're doing. It's cynical. And by the way, they rake in billions – billions and billions each year on opioids. They wouldn't rake in as much money if they only wanted to see those drugs used in the very pinpoint, specific situations they were meant for. They have tried to create a reality where they are encouraging people to use them, encouraging doctors.

One of the things Ann Marie Perrotto said – she said on Staten Island in so many places it's easy for kids to get these drugs because they're in every medicine chest on the block because they've been overprescribed so intensely.

We've got to change that behavior. And I'll tell you, hit them in the – hit them in the wallet. If these companies have to pay for what they have done and we're asking for at least half-a-billion just for what the cost has been in New York City. We think that will change behavior. It's also going to help educate people.

This is something I say to every parent. We all need to understand it. We need to challenge doctors if they – if they prescribe an opioid, don't take it on face value. It may be too strong a weapon for the problem you have and there's a real danger of getting hooked.

Scotto: Alright, let's talk about traffic in the city a little bit because we all know getting around really test our patience. Why are you not in favor of congestion pricing?

Mayor: So, I've always said the problem I have with it is one – a fairness issue, of making sure that the people – if people have to pay, are they getting something back for it? If people have to pay, does that money stay in New York City? These are the core questions.

Now, I believe the best way to solve the MTA crisis which is directly related is the millionaire's tax. I believe taxing New York City millionaires and billionaires and using those proceeds to fix the MTA for the long term is the best and most reliable approach –

Scotto: But how is that going to stop the traffic on the city? Have you thought about in certain areas there are bike lanes, it's making it impossible for people to do business in this city? And let's face Mayor, this high price city –

Mayor: Sure.

Scotto: -- And it's very difficult to do business here. You can't get deliveries, the delivery trucks have to park two and three deep because of the bike lanes.

Mayor: Yeah, but look, you're asking a different question. Let me at least come to that –

Scotto: Okay, okay.

Mayor: Your original question –

Scotto: Okay.

Mayor: Here is the central point. I have not supported congestion pricing historically. The plans before, I thought were very unfair. The most recent plan that came from the Governor's commission had some progress in it. For example, it did not put tolls on the East River Bridges. That was good in my view. That was more fair to Brooklyn and Queens. Here is the problem, I want to see a guarantee in any plan that any money raised goes to New York City subways, and buses does not get diverted elsewhere. That's really important.

Scotto: Okay, alright, I understand that. But how does that solve–

Mayor: And wait, wait I just want to finish. And congestion is not just solved by a plan that address's Midtown, Manhattan. Congestion is happening on the Staten Island Expressway on the Cross Bronx. Congestion is happening in lots of neighborhoods. The plan I put forward is to go at neighborhoods all over the city where there is a congestion problem including in Manhattan.

Here's the thing I think will make a big difference. We're experimenting right now with banning delivery trucks during rush hour, the time when people are trying to get around the most. You don't need a double parked delivery truck. Get those deliveries to be delivered at other hours. That's a strategy if we prove can be workable, that would be used in every borough. On the question on bike lanes, the bikes lanes – look, we've had huge success in getting people to use bikes, which is good for the environment, good for getting cars off the streets. They do also help us to slow down traffic as part of Vision Zero. We've seen a steady decline in traffic fatalities. That's incredibly important. We're saving kids, we're saving seniors. That's what Vision Zero is all about. Not every bike lane is perfect. And I've always said. If a bike lane is not working, change the configuration; change the exact nature of it. But the broad strategy of bike lanes, I think does work.

Stokes: Alright, let's talk President Trump and Governor Cuomo.

Mayor: Okay.

Stokes: I know we're pairing them. I don't know if that's possible or not.

Mayor: You're mischievous.

Stokes: Well, why not? So later today around three o'clock you have this meeting right?

Mayor: Yeah.

Stokes: In D.C. with other Mayors, but it's specifically to talk about the infrastructure.

Mayor: Correct.

Stokes: We know that you would like to stay on point with what the Obama administration had set forth to try to work out things with New York City. But we know that the president has said absolutely he owes you, and he owes New Yorkers really nothing. So how – what is the discussion that you're going to have?

Mayor: First of all, that may be the way the President when people are around him in the White House feel. That's a horrible way to think about the United State of America. We are the biggest city in the country, we are one the economic engines of this whole nation. This metropolitan area is one of the biggest economies in the country. You would like to believe a president, especially a president who grew up here would want to help us to continue to grow and deal with an infrastructure crisis. We have I think the number is over a hundred bridges over a hundred years old. We have a subway system in crisis. You go down the list. There are so many things, there is no way in the world we here can cover all these expenses. Look at the just the cost of Hurricane Sandy and what it did to this city and all the resiliency measures we need to put in place. We have a 20 billion dollar program on that right now, and that's not going to be enough. The president needs to focus on an infrastructure plan for the country that actually involves federal investment to spur onto our economy. So far he has not been willing to do that. I am going to challenge him on that.

Stokes: Which you have already, and always. You have, you know been, you've been a foe to the president and visa verse. So do you think what we're seeing even right now with Schumer and with the president going back at with each other, does it become personal?

Mayor: I never think of it as personal. I think it is about the beliefs. I think it's about the direction you want to take the city or the country in. And look, infrastructure – go back to the lessons to some of the greatest New Yorkers of all times. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Fiorello La Guardia who made those investments the core of what they did. Built the city we know and loved today. It worked, it put people to work and it made us stronger economically. New York City is this great economic engine, this great cultural capital. All the things we love about New York because those investments were made by our predecessors. In this generation it stopped. And it's bad for the country; it's dangerous for the country. You think China is not investing in infrastructure, and all the other big economic powers. Of course they are. This is the challenge. It's not personal; it's what's going to happen to the people on the ground. If we don't invest in this city, what's going to happen to 8.5 million New Yorkers? What's going to happen to their lives.

Scotto: You know, Mayor, it sounds all well and good. But you know, today in the New York Times there is an article that you and the Governor can't get along. Let's take it real local and that is how hurting the infrastructure here in this city that nothing can get done. Can you and Governor Cuomo get along?

Mayor: I think – again with the deepest respect, we've known each other for a long time – I disagree with the way you're framing the question. Governor Cuomo and I talk regularly. Our staffs talk regularly. There is plenty of areas where we found ways to come to an agreement.

Scotto: Well, the Times is saying that your relationship with the Governor is not helping matters. They're not blaming either one of you but together. I appreciate your devotion to the New York Times but don't believe everything you read in the papers. The – I don't have to agree with the Governor on every issue to get work done. But the big issue right now before us, the MTA. Here is why I feel very proud of. We finally have had had a discussion in this city that led to responsibility being assigned where it needs to be. The State of New York runs the MTA. The Governor names the heads of the MTA's. The Governor determines the budget for the MTA. Great, we finally have recognized who is in charge of piece. I am in charge of police, I am in charge of fire, I am in charge of sanitation, education, go down the list. The State is in charge of the MTA. We will work with them, but they need to take responsibility and they need to come up with a plan to actually fund the MTA properly.

Scotto: They say the City needs to throw in some money.

Mayor: And I say we'll always be ready to work with them. But first the \$456 million that the state took out of the MTA put it back.

Stokes: Alright, we still want you to stick around; we have some more questions for you.

Scotto: [Inaudible]

Stokes: We're going to talk about NYCHA.

Mayor: Stick around for further interrogation.

Stokes: That's right, you're not going anywhere. We won't let you.

[...]

Scotto: Alright, we're back with the Mayor of New York City, Bill de Blasio, let's talk about NYCHA. There are reports in every paper this morning that the head of NYCHA, Shola Olatoye, actually lied in front of the City Council about the inspections being done, once again, to the apartments in New York City. 4,200 inspections, she said they were done by HUD certified employees. 15 of them were done by HUD inspectors –

Mayor: Once again, don't believe everything you read in the papers. That's one reporter who has an axe to grind putting out a story –

Scotto: But the Department of Investigation is looking into this now –

Mayor: And I don't always believe the Department of Investigation has it right either –

Scotto: Why do you always support her? Because you've gotten –

Mayor: Because she has done a really good job for the people.

Scotto: You've gotten rid of everybody around her, including the second in command. Does the buck stop with the second, or does it stop with the first?

Mayor: Again, if we're going to have a conversation about what's really happening for 400,000 people in public housing, Shola Olatoye has run the Housing Authority for four years, took an almost bankrupt organization, righted its finances, made it stable, created a plan to invest in the future. Over \$2 billion the City has now put in to fix roofs, to create security, the crime problem in NYCHA was huge four years ago, working with NYPD, she helped to bring down crime steadily –

Scotto: This is 2016 –

Mayor: Wait, wait, wait, wait –

Scotto: Where now she is saying, under oath, asked twice –

Mayor: I –

Scotto: If they were HUD inspectors doing those – listen, if that was a private landlord, you would have put that person in jail.

Mayor: Rosanna, I disagree entirely with the way you are framing this. If you've got someone who's done that much good for people, first of all, let's put that in perspective. The only area where I've heard this kind of critique is on the lead issue.

I've spoken at this many, many times, bluntly, during the previous mayoral administration, the lead inspections were stopped. That should not have happened. We needed to catch that when we came into the door. We did not catch it. It took us too long figure it out. I'll take responsibility for everyone else.

Once we caught, we were open about it, and we made the fixes. Now the inspections have been done by the right kind of people. And a lot of money has been put in to address the lead issue. That's the practical reality. I am very confused why there is this fixation on attacking someone who has done so much good –

Scotto: Because she lied!

Mayor: No. You don't know she lied. There is an allegation –

Scotto: Well the Department of Investigation is looking into that –

Stokes: Alright, let's –

Mayor: I'm saying we understand, consistently, she had the information she had from her team, and she said what she knew. I don't accept the Department of Investigation or the Daily News' characterization in this article. I have not seen evidence of it.

Stokes: But we do have – we also know Letitia James, as well as Reuben Diaz Jr. both asked her to be – to step down –

Mayor: And that doesn't change my mind –

Stokes: We also know in addition to the lead paint, which yes, has the headlines. But we also were dealing with leaky roofs that ended up collapsing and putting tenants in peril and we also know, because you addressed during our big storm, about the heat not working in these different units.

And many of these tenants not having heat, we've had children that have been jeopardized not only because of lead paint, but because of the conditions inside that have been so cold, with no heat being fixed. So when you say that she has "righted the ship", and she is making tremendous progress, you might be the only one who believes that.

Mayor: Oh, against, that is very easy to say respectfully. Except you have to look at the reality of what 400,000 people are living with in buildings that for years got no investment, in a Public

Housing Authority that estimate is \$18 billion is the minimum estimate for how much money has to go in there. Some have said as much as \$25 billion.

If you were running an organization that before you ever came along, had \$25 billion worth of work that didn't happen, I'm sorry you can't walk in the door and wave and everything is okay. The question is given what she has dealt with, what she been able to do.

Taking a near bankrupt organization, making a solvent, reducing crime consistently, arranging for \$2 billion with us to fix roofs, to fix boilers, to create a more secure environment, these are huge steps forward. So, look, I don't like it when the heat is out. Of course, I've talked to tenants – residents whose heat is out and we do, with a really tough situation, our best to get that heat back on, and mostly it's the same day the heat comes back on.

Scotto: But people around her have been fired.

Mayor: Right.

Scotto: Except her. Did you have a special –

Mayor: But that doesn't – that doesn't follow –

Scotto: Did you have a special relationship? Is she a friend?

Mayor: I never knew her before she took this job –

Scotto: Why do you continue to support her?

Mayor: Because she has done the job. Again, I don't understand why the media loves the notion of firing people, even when they've done their job, sorry. We know some of the individuals, previously, did not follow through on their responsibility.

If you're the top of the food chain, you can't see everything, you have to be able to depend on your middle managers. We know some of them did not do their job, did not come forward and say we've got problem here on this lead issue. Those folks are gone.

But, when you look at the head of an organization who has steadily, consistently, improved a very troubled organization, guess what? She needs to stay for the good of those residents, and I don't care how many people feel differently. I've gone into those buildings, I talk to those residents, it's my responsibility to make sure they are safe. She has helped to make them safer, she has helped to protect them.

Stokes: Okay, because you've been here twice within three months, we're super happy about that. We're going to end this on a good note.

Mayor: Really?

Scotto: Yeah.

[Laughter]

Stokes: We're going to talk about the Grammy's, very quickly, you must be proud they are back here?

Mayor: I'm very proud.

Stokes: And we saw the tape, of course, of rehabbing this new mansion.

Mayor: Oh it's wonderful. So the fact that the recording academy is going to have a permanent presence now in New York City, and the fact that – look – we are the center of the music industry on the earth. This is the musical capital of the world. By the way, salsa born here, hip-hop born here, the American punk scene was born here, honestly, as a New Yorker, God bless L.A., I wish and I believe the Grammy's should be here on that regular basis because we are that musical capital.

But what's great for this week, incredibly exciting, huge infusion into our economy. The estimate is about \$600 million economic impact. So we say we are thrilled to have the Grammy's and come back more often.

Scotto: Mayor de Blasio, always great to have you, I love to agree to disagree with you.

Mayor: Agree d♦tente. We'll have d♦tente.

Stokes: Alright, thank you very much.

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