

Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Launches Major Campaign to Tackle Traffic Violence

May 2, 2022

Commissioner Ydanis Rodriguez, Department of Transportation: We are here together with Chief Royster, other fellow commissioners will be joining us, transportation, members of the transportation committee, Council Member Sandy Nurse, representative from our advocacy community, TA. Danny is here. And I don't know how he came back. Seba – was able to be here with us. They're giving a big round of applause.

[Applause]

Commissioner Rodriguez: He's the one that brought the five borough bike tour back, stronger than ever. 32,000 exactly all over the world over here yesterday, the largest bike tour in the whole nation. So thank you, Ken. We are here to get New York to pay attention to the danger or life changing effect of speeding. As you will see behind, these are eye-catching ad designs that we already are doing it. The message of the ad is simple. "Speeding ruins lives. Slow down." Let's watch now. They are in English and in Spanish as the beginning of what you will be seeing.

[Audio plays]

Commissioner Rodriguez: So again, this is what it will say in English and Spanish and in many languages. This is also connected with the same ad that you can see here. And you see in many locations. But, you know, the person that you will hear right now is the person who is the leader in our city. Is someone that is working with us. Let me give you the mayor of the City of New York, Mayor Eric Adams.

Mayor Eric Adams: Our brother. Pulling my people out of the rain. Good to see you all fresh off of the Inner Circle. Enjoyable night. So this is an important opportunity as we hit these important marks of how do we make our city safe? Something that Ydanis and

I talked about throughout the entire time and moment of our campaign. And we're looking at the numbers. Having safe streets is more than gun violence. The metal of a bullet destroyed lives and the metal of a car destroy lives. Since day one, my administration, we have been talking about public safety.

Mayor Adams: Public safety is a prerequisite of prosperity and it includes vehicle crashes. And New Yorkers of all kinds have been dealing with this violence. No community is safe. Traffic safety is public safety, and unfortunately we've seen traffic violence increase drastically in the past two years. This is a real crisis location to location, impacting families. Crashes are more frequent, speeding and reckless driving have increased, and driver and pedestrian deaths are far too high. And part of the conversation I had over the weekend with my commanders, we must zero in on the traffic stats that we had in place. When I was a police officer, we needed to focus on these locations in a real way. And right here in East New York, there have been over 35 fatalities and 300 serious injuries in the last five years. People are getting hurt. Families are being devastated and we are taking actions in a real way. We're going to bring traffic violence levels down through engineering, enforcement, and education. The three E's, we like to call it. My administration has invested over \$900 million in engineer safety, in safer streets. \$900 million.

Mayor Adams: You're going to increase enforcement on traffic laws. It's better to be proactive than reactive. And we need help from Albany with the camera legislation that we are attempting to pass through. Thanks to New York Senator Gounardes. Today, in partnership with the DOT and the NYPD, we are announcing an unprecedented, a term you hear often in this administration, unprecedented \$4 million to public awareness campaign in nine different languages telling people to slow down, pay attention because speeding ruins lives and speeding ends lives. This campaign will reach all five boroughs through ads and on TV and radio billboard buses, gas stations through our community and ethnic media. Something we extremely believe is important. Focusing on our ethnic media, wherever you live, whatever your language may be, we're going to get the message out there that we are not going to tolerate lawlessness of any level and that's including vehicle crashes.

Mayor Adams: We will make sure that everyone is a ban of laws to prevent the trauma that comes with the loss or injury of a loved one. This is the largest investment in public awareness of traffic violence since the start of Vision Zero. And this campaign will also direct \$1.5 million to community and ethnic media for the first time since the Vision Zero program began. So this is about more than just education through the public. It's a

marker that we are laying down to let people know that New York City is going to protect these streets and have a zero tolerance for violence, for children, for seniors, for families torn apart with vehicle violence. I want to thank this partnership coming together and just getting it done in a real way. We are aware of the increase in vehicle crashes, and we're going to take decisive action to prevent it from recurring. Thank you again, commissioner. Thank you very much.

Commissioner Rodriguez: Thank you, man. You're adding, and as you will see on the Vision Zero, now you see a subtitle ad, "building a safer city." That's the rebranding that we also have on Vision Zero. And this goes along with your measures to be sure that we improve safety across all areas. We need to step up our efforts to address the public health crisis being caused by speeding and reckless driving. And the Mayor Eric Adams administration, we're doing what you heard. Four additional million campaign, \$4 million campaign we are announcing today, which follow the historic investment already stated by the mayor of close to \$1 billion to redesign our streets, to make it safer for pedestrians and cyclists. I know we have directed the media to also see for themselves some of the work that our visions, our investment are paying for. Our crews were out today, transforming a crossing at Linden Boulevard, not far from here. We know that it's the work on the ground that delivers the real safety improvement for New Yorkers.

Commissioner Rodriguez: In the next five years, thanks to the Mayor Eric Adams, the city will have over \$900 million in funding to address the street safety and build out infrastructure, as we work to address the City Council, New York City Street Plan. The historic announcement follows our announcement this year that is committed to hardening 20 miles of protected bike lanes by the end of 2023, and DOT announcing with Mayor Eric Adams, that is planned to redesign over 1,000 intersections.

Commissioner Rodriguez: We are not stopping there, either. The next step is for us to be able to use even more tools in our toolbox. This week, the city will step up its effort in Albany, introduced so eloquently when we were last in Brooklyn to disclose Vision Zero. To obtain home rule, allowing us to expand our automatic enforcement, introducing speed cameras. I will be there tomorrow, visiting many state legislators, hoping that we will get their support. And hopefully, with a friend at a state leadership and assembly, we will get a home rule.

Commissioner Rodriguez: Now a little more about this campaign. Its presence will be widespread and falls citywide on massive billboards, such as this, on both [inaudible],

on LinkNYC kiosks, and gas station pumps. It will also run on radio and mainstream media and on digital formats in multiple languages. And it will run in seven languages for the newspaper and online digital banner ads. We are also making unprecedented investments in the community and ethnic media with this campaign. Every single one of the city Razor Community and AGNI media outlets will carry this ad, the first time in the history of New York City. As the author of this law, at that time, together with Brooklyn borough president, now Mayor Eric Adams, we passed a bill that created first in the city, the office of AGNI and Community Media.

Commissioner Rodriguez: [Spanish]

Commissioner Rodriguez: Let me now introduce the chairman of the Transportation Committee, Chairman Brooks-Power.

[...]

Commissioner Rodriguez: Thank you, Council member. At a Council call, they build the street master plan supposed to be investing \$1.5 billion in 10 year from this administration here, a commitment of close to \$1 billion in five years. So we are really putting more money than what the Council passed on the bill on the street master plan. But let me call Sandy Nurse also to say a few words, a great leader in transportation.

[...]

Question: A recent study out the University of Toronto looked at traffic signs on roads about traffic fatalities on roads in Texas, and found that they actually increased crashes by distracting drivers. What evidence do you have that these billboards have the effect of reducing crashes?

Mayor Adams: Well, number one, we would love to look at that study because the goal is not to contribute to a crisis. And if there's a way we have to pivot and shift just to use gas stations, just to use social media, just to use an educational program, which we are going to do inside our schools and our classrooms. We are going to look at the study and we're not going to do anything that's going to aggravate, increase the number of crashes. This is the first time I'm learning about the study and I'm sure the commissioner is going to look at it as well. But there's other methods to communicate

outside the signs, the billboards, that we are going to not leave any stone unturned to address this issue and educate the public.

[Crosstalk]

Question: You said you're going up to Albany tomorrow to work on the past. [inaudible] replacing the speed cameras, is that likely to pass? How likely do you think that will pass by the end of session?

Commissioner Rodriguez: We do our composite on the mayor, but I can say we have friends, we have a state senator and Assembly member working on behalf of this bill. We hold that friend, such as a Senator Leader Stewart-Cousins, and also Speaker Carl Heastie. We'll be working with those who will get this bill introduced and passed by- I don't know if the mayor...?

Mayor Adams: I communicated this yesterday with Assemblyman Heastie and I communicated this morning with Speaker Andrea Stewart-Cousins, and gave them our list of priorities. And this is one at the top of the agenda. And our team is going to be up in Albany, up to the end of the session and push this forward. Senator Bernard is very well respected in Albany and he's leading this initiative. And so we are going to continue to just pound the pavement and get this done before the end of the session.

Question: Have you talked to the governor about it at all?

Mayor Adams: No, I did not engage in the conversation with the governor this weekend, but I did speak with her previously, that this is a very important bill that we would like to see get forward.

Question: Yes. Mr. Mayor, you mentioned alongside this initiative, your initiative to stepping up to enforce the traffic laws, can you speak a little bit too, on what that's going to look like? Are there any specific resources we now include [inaudible]?

Mayor Adams: We had something called TrafficStat. And when I've met with my commanders this weekend – I'm going to zero in on making sure that we're doing TrafficStat. It identifies those intersections that are extremely dangerous. And it also looks at the local enforcement that's happening on the precinct level.

Mayor Adams: You know, we sent a mixed message. And I said this over and over again in the city, we sent a mixed message to police officers about enforcing those laws in the city over the last eight years. That message is changing. I'm sending a clear message that this city is not going to be a city of disorder, vehicle crashes is a city of disorder. And now we're going to zero in on those specific locations that people are speeding, driving fast, reckless driving. We're going to zero in on them and have the right enforcement to take place. And the best way to do it is through our TrafficStat. I say, if you don't expect what you expect, it's all suspect.

Question: Is this \$4 million, is this part of the [inaudible] or is this separate?

Commissioner Rodriguez: I'm so lucky that I was able to baseline a \$5 million for the Vision Zero at [inaudible] campaign. So this is part of the baseline of \$5 million. But the mayor also added an additional million dollars so that we can get it all into the community, [inaudible] but we got a million dollar additional so that we also can get into the mainstream media too.

Question: [Inaudible] 900 million investment. And I know that DOT already had a budget of \$4 million [inaudible]. Is 900 million in addition to what was already allocated [inaudible]?

Mayor Adams: Jacques from OMB will give you the exact breakdown of what dollars amount that includes the \$900 million dollars. Our press personnel will make that connection.

Question: The constant reckless driving on 6th street. What's the source of the issue? Is it speeding? Is it that the people [inaudible]?

Mayor Adams: If the chief [inaudible], if you don't have the exact numbers, we can bring them up. You have the exact numbers on what the number of vehicle accidents are connected to it?

Question: No, I don't.

Mayor Adams: So you know it?

Commissioner Rodriguez: So most, most of those crashes that happen in our city, involve drivers that have suspended license, drunk, or spinning. Those are the three categories of those drivers who get involved more than 70% of those drivers, again, that unfortunately are contributing to those crashes.

Question: So, is there an issue that there's not a harsh enough penalty that - are people not afraid to drive suspended punishment? [Inaudible].

Mayor Adams: That's such an important question. When I was in the state Senate, what we have traditionally failed to do. Hit and runs, you know, hit and runs with property damage only, not serious physical injuries to people we're not properly investigating those hit and runs. Normally when we have found people who participate in hit and runs, they have suspended license, their DWI, those are the issues we are facing. We need to take hit and runs more seriously. And it should be investigated properly because those are the habitual abuses of the criteria that the commissioner just laid out.

[Crosstalk]

Question: They are on COVID and I know your health commissioner is here too. He can weigh in [inaudible 00:24:05]?

Mayor Adams: Well. Yes. Come on, come on commissioner. You get some of this.

Question: If I can get the health commissioner to explain the significance of rising [inaudible] – the whether or not you think higher. And then also like to get it from the mayor. What your advice is to your hearing that the city is now going in the wrong direction?

Commissioner Ashwin Vasan, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: Thanks. So the question, Andrew, we moved into medium this morning on the basis of our case transmission rate. We also look at our hospitalization rate and our bed occupancy rate, the percentage of beds taken up by people with COVID infection on hospitalizations. We see a slight increase on – bed occupancy where relatively stable, both of those would have to jump up to a higher, a significantly higher level for us to move into a higher risk category. What we're saying with this move from low risk to medium risk is

with the rising risk. We need to take rising precautions. New Yorkers mask up when you're indoors, regardless of whether you know the vaccination status of the people around you mask up. It's the safe thing to do.

Commissioner Vasan: We're asking you to get vaccinated and boosted if you're eligible and haven't been. We're asking you to test yourselves frequently. And if you test positive, call your physician or call 212-COVID-19 to get treated right away, which prevents severe illness and keeps that hospitalization rate lower

Question: [Inaudible] now you're hearing other people get the cases up. What is your message to New York?

Mayor Adams: A clear one, vaccines and boosters work. I just had a tickle in my throat. I was able to exercise in the morning, no loss of breath and no conditions other than that. And I think that we need to acknowledge what happened using my case as a case study. Had a tickle in my throat, immediately went to get tested, found out it was COVID. I went home and stayed home. That is where the winning ticket is for our city. Millions of tests that are out there. People are testing themselves, they're identifying, they have COVID, they're staying home. Our precaution and our leading the country on testing and giving the right message has been a real winning ticket. So I say to New Yorkers, let's take necessary precautionary steps, wear your mask, get vaccinated, get boosted and we can weather this storm. We're looking at the complete scenarios every morning. The medical team is updating us. We're looking at the number of hospitalizations, the number of deaths, the antiviral medicines that are out there. We are equipped better than we were before. And as long as New Yorkers continue to do the right thing, we can weather this storm together.

Question: [Inaudible].

Mayor Adams: I'm a big believer in outdoor dining. I think the shed programs were a lifesaver for our restaurants. And what's happening on the 9th Avenue initiative, we have to do major street repairs and we have to dig up the streets; and then when you dig them up, we want to make sure we pave them back correctly. So according to the City Council, they're looking at how do we make the shed program a better program. I'm a strong supporter of them remaining. And we're just telling those here on 9th Avenue, hold on. But they're coming back. We know it was a real boost for the economy. It helped out restaurants and kept them afloat. And if I have my way, unless the City

Council goes in a different direction, the sheds are here to stay. But a beautification in the process, we must beautify, standardize and make them make sure that they fit into our economy.

Question: [Inaudible].

Mayor Adams: Yeah, we don't know how long. I will find out from DOT how long they would be down, but they will be back.

Question: So Mayor, going back to COVID, part of the new trick of the alert level is considering reinstating Key to NYC, the vax mandate for indoor spaces. What do you weigh as you consider that? Or are you considering that at all?

Mayor Adams: A combination. The doctors made it clear in the briefing with our medical team. Number one, the number of cases, hospitalization, as well as deaths. And we're not going to wait until the hospitalizations get to a crisis before we pivot and shift. I say this over and over again, COVID is a formidable opponent. And if you're stringent, you're not going to defeat something that's not stringent. We're going to pivot and shift and be honest with New Yorkers as we move forward. We're not there yet, but based on whatever the analysis with the medical team, we're going to make the decision to keep our city up and operating. We can't close down the city again. We make the right decisions, we're not going to have a worry about doing that.

[Crosstalk]

Question: Can you talk about the crime fighting plan that just rolled out today, listing how many officers and what they are going to be tasked with doing?

Mayor Adams: Really zeroing in and going after gangs, which are the drivers of our shootings, going after those hotspots. My meeting on Saturday with my commanders and hearing from them, it was an extremely revealing meeting on what needed to be done on the ground. And what we have historically done, we have tied public safety only to policing. We are going to engage every agency in this city to be part of our public safety fight. And that is what the – what we did Saturday with our commanders, we're doing it with all of our agencies.

Mayor Adams: And so with our precinct commanders and officers are now going to have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. Listen, for eight years, we have told police for the most part, not to carry out public safety. Don't deal with jumping the turnstile. Don't deal with people going to the store, stealing. Open drugs displays in our city. That stopped. January 1st, that message is over, and we are going to get on the ground to every police officer. We're not going to have the city of disorder. And that's part of the plan that was rolled out this weekend.

Question: Thank you. I hope I'm not at risk of getting flipped off by you or Chris Redd.

Mayor Adams: Ask the question or I'm bouncing. Don't be thick skinned. It's satire. Don't be thin skinned. You write articles that – I just take them, even when they're distorting the truth. I handle it. So be a big boy.

Question: Okay, I'll be a big boy.

Mayor Adams: Don't be thin skinned.

Question: Let get to my question.

Mayor Adams: Okay.

Question: My question is, at the Inner Circle dinner, you showed up very late.

Mayor Adams: Uh-huh (affirmative).

Question: You were only there for the part where you were giving the rebuttal. Why did you show up so late and why weren't you there to take the heat?

Mayor Adams: Well, actually I was there for three hours. During a time when you have Ramadan, I had a number of Iftar dinners to do. I had a number of other issues. As I stated, I had a full day meeting with my entire command staff. Being there three hours, I'm nowhere for three hours. Trust me. Soon as I got there, I went upstairs, took pictures with all of my participants because of the amazing job that Inner Circles is doing. But

you cannot find me three hours in one location anywhere in the city. I dedicated three hours to the Inner Circle because I believe in the mission.

Mayor Adams: And I had so much fun. I didn't think I was going to have that much fun, had a lot of fun. It was great to see the acts that I saw. And I think that you should continue to do it, and the Inner Circle personnel, they should be commended, your contribution to the city. And I just enjoyed it. I got some good jokes for the next year, and I'm looking to say about.

[Crosstalk]

Question: You were at Iftar dinners throughout the night?

Mayor Adams: I had several things that I had to do on that night. Again, I was there for three hours. I'm nowhere for three hours. This is a big city with big issues and big problems, and I'm a mayor that has to respond to them. I dedicated three hours that night. No other organizational institution in this city can say that Eric spent three hours in one location. Thank you.

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