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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON INSIDE CITY HALL**

**Errol Louis:** Welcome back to Inside City Hall, just a short time ago City Hall released new data showing that in the few weeks since the speed camera program expired more than 132,000 drivers have been observed speeding. Mayor de Blasio joins me now to talk about that and much more. Good evening Mr. Mayor, I thought I had read the numbers wrong, 132,000 incidents just in the two week period. They are not getting summons but the cameras were going and you recorded them.

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Errol, I'm in as much shock as you are. It's the summer, you think it couldn't be that big a number – it's astounding how many people speed when they think they can get away with it. And I have said many times, you know what, people have to face consequences, they have to know that if they are speeding where there may be children crossing the street to school, that something is going to happen. You can't just get away with that, you literally could be taking a child's life into your hands. So the speed cameras reduced speeding by 60 percent in the school zones we had them, reduced fatalities by 55 percent. What's more sacred than being able to save a child's life? The minute they are gone – literally two weeks' worth of data immediately after they lapsed, 132,000 times when motorists were speeding in a school zone, by the way by this definition it's more than ten miles per hour above the speed limit. We aren't talking about they are supposed to be going 25 and they went 26. No this is like serious speeding and this unfortunately is the shape of things to come if the State Senate doesn't come back and do its job and do what the Assembly has already which was to continue the speed cameras around our schools and in fact expand upon them. The Governor said he's ready to sign the bill, the only reason our children are not being sufficiently protected is the State Senate won't come back and finish the job.

**Louis:** Not for nothing that's a fair chunk of change, right? That's got to be upwards of \$10 million in those couple of weeks.

**Mayor:** I don't know the exact number but I've said many times this is has never been about revenue because we'd love nothing more than to see the revenue plummet because people stop speeding. The whole idea is to say to people, you know, if you are not doing anything wrong you aren't going to get ticketed. And you know sometime I hear these I think quaint, you know suggestions, oh well other things will do the trick. Well guess what we are human beings. If we think we can get away with something, in too many cases people do. But if you know there's going to be a consequence, if you think oh I'm going by a school, I'm about to get hit by a

serious ticket, you are going to slow down. If that's what it's going to take to make you less reckless and to treat that very sacred space the right way and protect kids, so be it.

**Louis:** Well you talk about other things maybe doing the trick – my understanding is that one of the more important voices in this debate, it's sad that we are even having debate, has been the PBA, which would rather have its members out there handing out tickets, you know, that this is a form of automated work that they just don't want to see happen.

**Mayor:** I respect our police officers a lot and I have real disagreements with the union. But I'll tell you something it makes no sense whatsoever, ask any New Yorker, would you rather have a cop standing there waiting to give a speeding ticket when the camera can capture the same thing, have the same preventative impact, create the same consequence, and that officer could be out fighting crime or dealing with something that only a human being could do? We have 36,000 police officers, the most we have had in the last 15 years. They are doing a fantastic job but they need to keep doing the things that they are doing. These cameras are working, in fact the Assembly said they are working so well, let's expand them, let's double the number. If I said to you anything else the government did which was you know having this kind of success rate, driving down speeding already 60 percent, you would say get me more of that. And it certainly pays for itself. We've got to get this done. I don't know what, I have not heard a good reason from the State Senate why they won't come back and finish the job and people are starting in a matter of weeks. I think parents all over New York City are going to say why are you leaving our kids in a situation that may be unsafe, come back and do the job.

**Louis:** Okay we will certainly take that up and continue to follow that. While we are talking about traffic safety, Madison Jane Lyden is the young woman, 23-years-old, she was killed, a combination of apparently reckless and possibly drunk driving combined with a livery car that parked in the bike lane. Now I read, the thing that troubled the most Mr. Mayor, the livery car apparently got no summons although it seems to have been a key part of what caused this fatal accident. Doesn't that in its own way create the same kind of hazard as shutting off speed cameras? If people know that there's going to be no consequences even after a catastrophe like this, they have no incentive to stop parking in the bike lane.

**Mayor:** There's got to be consequences for this case for sure in my opinion. Now the investigation is underway but I have an unusual vantage point because I happened to go very nearby just after the incident – students from Parkland, Florida were giving a talk at the Ethical Culture Society and I went and met with a number of the students and when I came out, went to see what had happened and the officers there went through the situation with me. This for hire vehicle driver was in a bus stop, in fact an even worse situation in one way, he was in a bus stop. That from everything I know should have been summoned right there. We don't know the facts but it does appear a reckless action by the driver then set everything else into motion. People have to understand this 23-year-old girl, she you know, a young woman who, I mean I have a daughter who is 23, I mean humanly there at the scene I just felt this horrible sinking feeling that her parents must have felt when that phone call came in but she was minding her own business, she was in a bike lane, young woman visiting us as a tourist, now she's gone, probably because of reckless driving is what I think, I don't have all the facts but that's what I think. There have to be more consequences, there has to be a dynamic, I think it's true about speed cameras, I think it's true about enforcement by all of our officers – NYPD, TLC, etcetera, a reality of enforcement. By the way NYPD has increased all sorts of enforcement very effectively, like

failure to yield to pedestrians, we've got to do all the above, and I also support stronger penalties. I mean the horrible tragedy in my own neighborhood in Park Slope, because here you had someone who had a disease that caused them to lose control of their vehicle, they did not take, the individual involved did not take the steps that she should have taken to no longer create that hazard for others. She's going to suffer consequences, I think we need much stronger laws to stop that kind of activity to ensure the doctors have to report directly when someone has that kind of condition. I think one of the powerful thing we've seen in the whole Vision Zero era is create a culture on consequence if you expect fundamental change and that's what we are trying to do.

**Louis:** It sounds like this is the Vehicle and Traffic Law which is a state law that would have to be done in Albany.

**Mayor:** Yes, in the case of someone with a medical condition, that would have to be done in Albany but it needs to be done. You know every tightening up that we are doing is working. Right, this is what we are finding – more enforcement in the speed cameras, tougher laws, tougher penalties, City Council has done a great job also on recognizing that look, sometimes it's just plain reckless driving, sometimes it's a driver who did not do what they were supposed to do. If you failed to yield now and God forbid you kill someone, the penalties are much clearer than they were a few years ago. But there are still a lot tighter laws and penalties that we need.

**Louis:** Okay before we go to break, let me round out our traffic discussion, you're supposed to sign ride hailing legislation tomorrow, how is it – there's one piece of it that I just don't understand. The proponents of it have said that it's going to improve wages for drivers, other than a hoped for supply and demand outcome, what's going to ensure that people's wages go up?

**Mayor:** Well there's two parts to it, one the supply and demand dynamic is essential in any free enterprise reality, the fact that there has been limitless growth in the number of drivers and vehicles has dumbed down wages for the for hire vehicle sector and the yellow taxi sector. Finally saying we are going to put a pause on that and now trying to evaluate what's the right number of vehicles we should have on the road, inevitably will help to correct the supply and demand dynamics and that will push up wages. But the other piece of the equation is in the next few months the TLC is going to look at a minimum compensation level and codify that. So we start treating these workers like all other workers. How do you have so many people, such a huge industry, tens of thousands of people, with no guarantees what they are going to bring home each day – I mean that creates a horrible desperation for folks and they are working very long hours for most of them, effectively working sub minimum wage. So we will be putting some real rules in place to guarantee appropriate minimum level of compensation.

**Louis:** Okay we will be watching to see what those might be. Let's take a quick break here, I'll be right back with more from Mayor de Blasio, stay with us.

**Louis:** Welcome back to Inside City Hall, I'm joined once again by Mayor de Blasio. I want to talk about the cover story of New York Post where they went through public records, which the administration had made public, and they conclude that de Blasio officials held lobbyist meetings on 54 of 65 City workdays between March and May, attending 46 about real estate and housing. Lobbyist meetings are almost always about that, I mean they have a very disproportionate share

of the lobbyists are hired to do this stuff. One activist said that this shows they have an open door to real estate developers and corporate lobbyists. I wanted to give you chance to respond.

**Mayor:** That's just wrong. First of all [inaudible] about 80 different City officials are covered by that. So when you look at that perspective, it's really very few meetings. We're the first administration to make this information public. This is a choice we made. This is a values choice to say that we want this level of transparency. There is no law, City, or State, or federal forcing us to do it, we wanted the public to see and be able to ask any follow up questions they want.

In fact a lot of those meetings were for example cultural institutions coming in to meet with Deputy Mayor Glenn who now has them in her portfolio, has Department of Cultural Affairs, and to talk about their needs and their vision. A lot of that was people talking about affordable housing, which is a central priority for the administration. So I just – this attempt to stereotype it at as one thing or another I think is really unfair. The important story here is, it's all out in the open, we're very comfortable with the information being out in the open, we're the first administration to ever do it, happy to talk about any of the meetings reported and that empowers the media and the public to be able to look into it –

**Louis:** Well we're very grateful for the transparency but then there are questions, right? It says also compensation for lobbyists have rapidly grown under de Blasio from \$63 million in 2013 to a record \$96 million last year, a 53 percent jump since he took office. Surely the people who were paying almost a \$100 million a year are now wasting their money, right? What are they buying?

**Mayor:** Look, I can't speak to what they are thinking. We talk to everyone – you know we – I certainly can say from my own personal experience, 55 town hall meetings, and all the conversation I have with elected officials, and clergy leaders, and community leaders, and I know everyone in the administration is in the same situation. We spend a whole lot of time talking to elected leaders and civil leaders about their interests, their concerns, advocates for sure. I mean if I gave you the list of all the advocates meeting with members of the administration on different issues it would far outweigh anything from lobbyists.

Some organizations, non-profit and for-profit, hire a lobbyist, that's their right under the law. But what's powerful here is we're saying, you can do that, but if you want to meet with us, we're going to put it out there for the world to see and then you should answer, and we should answer if anyone has any questions.

**Louis:** Your lack of concern about even the appearance of it is, you know, part of why there is a 53 percent jump, right? They say, look, we can go meet with anybody, only four percent of the lobbying is actually with, you know, anybody super close to you, meaning that they don't write down City Hall necessarily, they're going to meet with your Commissioners, and your Deputy Commissioners, and the people who make stuff happen for their clients, right? That's what this is all about.

**Mayor:** Yeah, but you know, respectfully the inference is wrong. First of all, anything that is this transparent is a big step in the right direction for democracy. I can't conjecture what the past was like because I wasn't in all those rooms, but I sure as hell know it was less transparent, and there is a lot of stuff that we know in the history of this City that wasn't so pretty. We're saying, we're

pleased to show people a road map of who met with who because we know things are being done appropriately, we're making the decisions on the merits based on what the people need, and again a whole lot more meetings with people representing the grassroots than anybody who is a lobbyist.

But just because someone is a lobbyist doesn't mean that they aren't representing a legitimate interest. We're going to listen to their points like we listen to people who have the opposing point. The problem is when this stuff is hidden. The problem is when there is undue inference, or influence I should say, by lobbyists. I can tell you, that's not happening here, we're very comfortable, we'll listen, and then we'll make the decisions on there.

**Louis:** It's a logical inference that if you're a community activist who's dealing with say affordable housing and you're on the opposite side of an extremely well-funded lobbyist, and you look at the fortunately, transparently disclosed information, and they see that they've been meeting with your Deputy Mayor over and over and over again, pretty much –

**Mayor:** But Errol it's not over and over again –

**Louis:** What should the activists think?

**Mayor:** Respectfully – respectfully you're painting this scenario that is just not true, 80 different officials accounted for in that report, so most of these officials [inaudible] meeting with a lobbyist, but again we meet with everyone else and all of the other viewpoints too. And I think there is a misunderstanding of, certainly from our point of view, how lobbyists are regarded. They're just another voice, they do not have any special influence, we take everything they say with a perfectly big grain of salt and we make decisions on the merit, and I meet with – I meet with, I don't personally, as you know, meet with lobbyists, I meet with lots of other kinds of people representing different parts of the city. But I know my team is meeting with a cross section of people all the time and we're weighing all the arguments and we're listening to everyone. So, maybe in a different kind of administration there's something else in their relationship with a lobbyist that gives the lobbyist more weight. That's not true of us.

**Louis:** If – in activism, there are many of them if you go project by project, you've heard the arguments and we've talked about them here. If they're saying, in many cases, the fundamental formula that allows for-profit developers to put in as much market or near-market rate housing compared with the affordable units, if they want to change that philosophy, if they want to sort of challenge what was your starting assumption, shouldn't they be concerned about the number of meetings and the amount of money that's going into –

**Mayor:** No, because the, again, if – if a particular company or nonprofit or anyone hires a lobbyist, that's their choice; they could've equally just come in themselves. It's the same effect. If the head of a company, if a CEO comes in, if the executive director of nonprofit comes in, if the head of an advocacy group comes in or a community civic leader, head of community board, we're meeting with everyone. And if they say hey we disagree with a basic concept, for example, mandatory inclusionary housing, which we're very proud of, which required affordable housing to be part of every rezoning, literally made it a legal requirement, never existed before in the history of this city. If they say well we think it should be even more, we're going to say here's what the law says, but if there's a formula where we could go and put more affordable housing

in, we'll have that conversation. Sometimes we've been able to do that. But [inaudible] we're going to listen to all the voices. As you know in land use the ultimate voice that matters besides the administration and the City Planning Commission is the councilmember. So the councilmember equally is listening to different – different voices, different constituencies. But we're going to make a decision trying to balance all the information we hear and deciding, for example, what's going to get the most affordable housing in that situation.

**Louis:** Not to say that you have or even claim to have an answer to this, but on this question of preferential rents, where landlords have voluntarily not charged the limit of what they could under the stabilization laws. One of the concerns with the Inwood Rezoning, for example, is that there is this ticking time bomb that, at some point, the rents are going to jump spectacularly high, it will be entirely legal, it will not involve illegal evictions or anything like that and there'll be massive displacement.

**Mayor:** Um, one, and I think as Brooklynites, you and I know a lot about this issue and I always refer people to the history of our borough: there was no rezoning in Bed Stuy or Prospect Heights or Bushwick, even Crown Heights. You've seen all of the changes and all of the pressures and where people had preferential rent because of the market pressures saw that brought up to the legal level. It was not because of rezoning, it was because the market was already moving. That's happening in Washington Heights and Inwood already. I believe the power of rezoning is to put the public sector into the equation, to guarantee thousands of units of affordable housing, thousands of apartments that need to be newly built or preserved, subsidized literally for a generation, for the people living in them now; that's what a rezoning could achieve. If we did a hands-off and said, you know what, we're just going to leave Inwood be and hope things are okay, that's a fantasy land from my point of view. Those pressures, those market pressures are going to push up those rents either way, but this way, we got a lot of affordable housing done, we got a lot of investment in schools, cultural institutions, parks, jobs, and small business that will help protect the folks who are in the neighborhood.

**Louis:** Okay, we're going to leave it there. We ran out of time. I got more to talk about, we'll leave that for next week. Thank you for coming by.

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