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RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR BILL DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON WNYC

Brian Lehrer: Mr. Mayor, thanks for giving us a few minutes this morning.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: My pleasure, Brian – talking to you live from Woodside, Queens. I'm on 50th Street out here and getting a firsthand look at the work our sanitation workers are doing.

Lehrer: And I heard you mention Woodside by name and Sunnyside in one of your appearances yesterday as places where – maybe there weren't as plowed as some other locations in the city. How are things this morning?

Mayor: I think that they've improved. I'm out here with Council member Jimmy Van Bramer and we've been talking about where the problem spots are. I think the big picture is – great city-wide performance by the sanitation department, especially on the primary and secondary roads. I think when it comes to the tertiary roads, we needed to do better in some parts of Queens – and it's different depending on neighborhoods. I think Woodside, Sunnyside, Corona, East Elmhurst, Jackson Heights, we need to get this done [inaudible] better. I was out in South Jamaica, yesterday. I was out in Flushing, Astoria, Long Island City – actually looked pretty good yesterday. So, different parts of the borough fared differently, but we definitely need have to finish this today, get these streets in better shape, and, I think, overall though, the weather is helping immensely of course. It's a sunny, beautiful day – it's helping to melt the snow. And I want to remind all New Yorkers, alternate-side suspended for the entire week, even for next Saturday. That's going to [inaudible]. Leave your car where it is. Don't shovel it out that only makes it harder on sanitation. Just leave it where it is, let the snow melt off and sanitation can do their job.

Lehrer: Do you have an indication that New Yorkers are following that advice? So many people are used to at least digging the car out and then deciding whether or not they're going to use it.

Mayor: Well, I'm going by what I've seen this morning. I left Gracie Mansion, went out to Corona, then came over here to Woodside. I'd say a good number of cars that have been left in place – obviously haven't been touched. I hope the fact that people got the message that, you know, alternate-side will gone for the whole week and they could just feel free leaving their car the way it is – I hope that had a positive effect. I think a fair number of people are doing that.

Lehrer: Explain the problem, again, with digging out the cars. It's that as they shovel the parking spot, they put the snow in the middle of the street again?

Mayor: That's right. When you think about it, we had 27-inches of snow – almost the record for the entire recorded history of snow in this city, going back to 1869. So, that much snow has to go somewhere. If people keep shoveling out their snow and, unfortunately, put the snow right in the middle of the street, it actually re-clogs the street and it becomes a real challenge for sanitation. So, we're talking about huge volumes of snow – look, if someone has to shovel out and they really, really need their car, we're asking them, of course, to try and just shovel out as little as possible, keep it to the sidewalk side if possible. But the best thing is, use mass transit.

Find another way, if you can, so we can leave these cars where they are, let sanitation really clear the roads and then over time some of this is going to melt off in the next couple of days.

Lehrer: We happen to have a Queens resident with me in the studio, Gabriel Sherman, political reporter for New York Magazine. He lives in Jackson Heights and he asked if he could ask you a question. So, I'm going to let him –

Mayor: It's a democracy, Brian. Why not?

Gabriel Sherman: Mr. Mayor [inaudible] streets, yesterday, and the side streets were not plowed, but the bigger question I have is for the sidewalks – how does the city enforce sidewalk shoveling? Because in our neighborhood, there are a lot of elderly residents and there's, in some stretches, almost [inaudible] feet of snow on the sidewalk and it's very dangerous.

Mayor: It's a tough situation. Look, the law is, everyone is supposed to get their sidewalk shoveled, whether you're a homeowner – and I certainly have plenty of experience with this as a homeowner and – or a store owner. You're supposed to do it. [Inaudible] not want senior citizens exerting themselves in a dangerous manner. So, in that case, you know, other family members, neighbors could help out or obviously, someone could hire a kid from the neighborhood to do it. But it is every homeowner and every store owner's obligation to shovel out in the immediate aftermath of the storm. We aren't going to start ticketing people, obviously, we have other things we have to focus on but as the streets get clearer today, we're going to start focus on that enforcement, in terms of homeowners and store owners. And, look, it's just the decent thing to do is to, you know, get out there and help everyone else move around and help everyone else be safe.

Lehrer: New York City schools are open today. That's always a tricky call in a situation like this. What made up your mind?

Mayor: It was very clear to me that even by yesterday morning, sanitation had done an incredible job with so many of our primary and secondary roads. We, obviously, were blessed to have a Sunday when there wasn't as much traffic when – decent, you know, fairly warm, in the scheme of things, sunny day. That was ideal for clearing the snow and so, it was clear to me that sanitation would have the city largely up and running – and we don't like to miss a school day for a lot of reasons, including, obviously, our kids' education but also working parents depend on school being open and we don't like to let them down unless there's a real issue of safety. So, there's no question in my mind that we could make it work. There's always going to be some places where it's trickier. There's always going to be some places where it's not the way we'd ideally like it to be but overall it was a pretty straightforward equation, even as early as yesterday morning.

Lehrer: Public schools are closed in a lot of the suburbs around the city and, in general, it seems like things are worse – just a little bit – just a little bit outside the city in a lot of areas, in terms of the streets. Why do you think the city wound up in such better shape today than a lot of the surrounding areas?

Mayor: I think because we have been learning with each storm and making adjustments. I can certainly say from the two years I've been in office, we've seen a number of storms. We've been acting earlier, putting out a lot more personnel and equipment earlier, and that is making a big difference. We had 500 salt spreaders out pre-treating the roads before the storm hit and we had 1,800 plows that went right out as soon as we had a few inches of accumulation. We converted all of the spreaders to plows when we needed to. So, when we were at peak we had 2,500 plows out simultaneously – 850 of which were in Queens as of yesterday. So, I think it's the sheer amount of equipment and personnel and the planning and the getting – assuming it's going to be worth – now, look, this is an object lesson, we're in the age of extreme weather now. This is because of global warming, let's be real straightforward about it – and a storm that on Friday, we were being told would be eight to 12 inches, ended up at 27-inches and with accumulations of two or three inches per hour at some points. So, we're

going to be assuming a lot worse than the projections going forward and just pre-positioning our assets and going right at it early. I think that's the key to success.

Lehrer: I know you got to get back to doing the rest of your job on this day – day-and-a-half after the storm but just tell me how the communication was with the MTA regarding LIRR service and with Governor Cuomo in general in this case. So, for example, the agency said – MTA said – some service on LIRR would start at 5:00 am then some time over night that changed to 7:00 am – and there's confusion as to who knew what, when. How in-the-loop were you? How in contact with the Governor were you on any of this?

Mayor: I'd say, you know, in the last couple of days, I spoke to the governor about a half-dozen times. Our teams have been talking non-stop. The LIRR, obviously, that does affect the city for sure but I think [inaudible] were in the suburbs but I think the coordination around the MTA, meaning the subways and buses, was outstanding. The decisions, I think, were the right decisions to get the buses in off the streets at the right time and the overlaying subways to shut them down at the right time. Look, I remember vividly the 2010 storm when, I think, the city underestimated what was coming and buses stayed out way too long – the MTA, obviously, MTA is run by the state and so, the city was out of position, I think the state was out of position – and in that storm, you remember all the buses that were stranded all over the city, I mean I vividly remember one in Park Slope that was just a, you know, a cater-corner in the middle of the road, stuck, which was making it hard for plowing for to happen and for emergency vehicles to get around. So, I think the MTA was smart. They got them in while they could and that also meant when sanitation was finished with the streets they could go back up and running with the bus service pretty quickly. So – good coordination and good decisions by the state and the MTA.

Lehrer: And you're scheduled to go to Albany – last question – to testify before the state legislator. Your press office you're going for now, last I heard. Is that still on?

Mayor: Oh yes, yes. From everything I can tell there's no reason to alter that plan. Again, the city is in pretty good shape. We're going to get out there and finish this – these smaller roads today. We're going to finish strong here with that but that's important to get up to it in Albany. And, far as I can tell, everything's on schedule.

Lehrer: Want to give us a tiny preview of your legislative agenda for Albany?

Mayor: It's – I will only tell you the kinds of things I've talk about before – and the simplest way to say it is, you know, we want to make sure New York City is treated fairly throughout and we're pleased that the governor is saying that CUNY and Medicaid cuts they originally proposed would not cost us – the city – “a penny,” and we respect that, but we will also hold them to that.

Lehrer: Mayor Bill de Blasio, live from Woodside. Thank you for giving us a few minutes this morning.

Mayor: You're welcome, Brian. Take care.

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