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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT TAXI AND
LIMOUSINE COMMISSION CEREMONY HONORING DRIVERS WITH
OUTSTANDING SAFETY RECORDS**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thank you so much. Thank you. Please – thank you. It is great to be here. And this is – this is something that we need to do more often in our city – celebrate the good news, celebrate folks who are doing the right thing and are doing so much for others. And that defines everyone here in this audience and it defines everyone here on this stage. So I'm very honored to start a Monday morning with good news, with people doing the right thing, with people helping others. It's encouraging and it's energizing for me to see all of you here today as part of this good cause.

I want to say something about a couple of people up here and then I want to talk about all gathered to be honored. First of all, Meera Joshi as the chair of the TLC – I have to say, I've spent a lot of time on these issues that the TLC works on over the years. They're complicated. They elicit strong feelings. They have to do with everything about everyday life in this city. To be able to listen to all, work with all, be fair and balanced and judicious in such a complicated context is not a minor matter, it's not a small task. It takes tremendous skill and wisdom and patience – and we have that in Meera Joshi. Let's thank her for all that she does.

[Applause]

And we're going to say throughout today that the TLC is a crucial partner in everything we're doing with Vision Zero. Vision Zero has captured the imagination of this city. This is a city that – yes, we are a tough people, we're a resilient people, but we're also a hopeful people. And so, Vision Zero has captured people's imagination because they know we can do so much better. The TLC is a crucial part of this initiative – all of you are a crucial part of it – and that's why I'm so thrilled to be here today – because Vision Zero is one of the things that's really starting to work more and more and make people's lives better, and the TLC has been quick to play a leadership role in that effort.

Now, a lot of great people up here today – I want to thank them. We have tremendous partners that we work with every day in the City Council. One of the people that I am closest too and

think the most like – and we have worked together so closely and it’s been my joy as the chair of the Transportation Committee – our councilmember from northern Manhattan, Ydanis Rodriguez – let’s thank him for all he does.

[Applause]

The members of the TLC, in addition to Meera – they all do so much to make this agency work, to address such complicated and important subject matter. I want to thank my good friend, Frank Carone, who I’ve worked with for many, many years – thank you helping to lead the program today and for all you do at the TLC. Let’s thank Frank.

[Applause]

Let’s thank Edward Gonzales, Elias Arout, Lashann DeArcy – all of them do a great job.

You heard some of the members of my administration are here. Victor Calise, who runs the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities, does a great job there. Nisha Agarwal, who runs the Mayor’s Office for Immigrant Affairs, is doing a great job and is helping to create our municipal ID program, which is admired already all around the country. And Chief Thomas Chan, the chief of transportation for the NYPD, has been a crucial ally in our Vision Zero efforts.

NYPD has really embraced Vision Zero – from Commissioner Bratton and Chief Chan all the way down – and that’s made a world of difference and that’s why we’re making the progress we are making – because TLC is present, DOT is present, NYPD is present – everyone is in common cause. Let’s thank Chief Chan for all he does.

[Applause]

And I just also want to say a special thank you to Archbishop David Hartman for, I thought, a beautiful rendition of the national anthem and for all he does – let’s thank him.

[Applause]

So the amazing thing is, 295 people here today – 295 people have distinguished themselves – every one of you has distinguished yourselves in a really extraordinary manner. This is arguably one of the toughest places to do the work you do anywhere in the world. There are approximately 115,000 drivers when you take all the different parts of this industry, but 295 made it to this acknowledgement as members of the honor roll. That is something extraordinary. That means a level of accomplishment that’s rare.

And you know in this town, anything can happen at any moment, so – I can – by the way, I can relate to that – that’s part of my job too – anything can happen at any moment, but you have to not only drive in challenging circumstances, you have to be ready for literally the unexpected around every turn. And despite that, you’ve managed these extraordinary safety records.

Now, when you think about all the drivers who have made the honor roll in the last five years, these are some amazing statistics. Take the drivers who have made the honor roll in the last five years, put them together, they have logged nearly 20 million miles combined – 20 million miles – picked up more than 8 million passengers. And it's extraordinary how much this industry does and the sheer volume that you deal with and yet how safe each of you has been in that process.

You help to set the tone for everything in this city. The work you do is a quintessential part of New York City and how you drive on the road often sets the tone for everyone else. So when we look at what you've accomplished, it's absolutely amazing.

I want to mention one of the stories – one of you today – because it's quite extraordinary. Fred Amofo – wait, I can do better than that – A-mo-a-fo – sorry, Fred – of Queens comes originally from Ghana. In the last five years, Fred has driven over 190,000 miles – that would be enough to circle the globe more than 7.5 times. He's picked up over 50,000 passengers. He's been at it now for 19 years. He's always focused on safety. And for him, it's not just that he's conscientious and he's professional and that's why he cares about safety – it's not just he knows safety is quintessential to all we need to do – he also thinks of it from a personal perspective. Two years ago, his own son, his teenage son, a senior at Brooklyn Tech High School, was hit by a car outside the school. Thank god his son was not badly injured, but Fred can think from a very personal perspective of what it means to drive safely.

I happen to have now my own senior at Brooklyn Tech – and I think of Dante and I think of my daughter Chiara all the time when we do this work to propel Vision Zero forward. Meera Joshi has a senior at Brooklyn Tech – there seems to be a theme here. But we all bring it back to our own families. We did an event last week outside a school and we talked about the fact that we have to help all New Yorkers know that when you're anywhere near a school that should automatically say it's time to slow down. Think of the children in your life – slow down. Think of the children in your life, think it could be one of them in the crosswalk up ahead, and comport yourselves in the right manner.

We have to do this because we're still facing a huge challenge when it comes to traffic fatalities. Being struck by a car is the leading cause of injury-related death for children younger than 14. It's our number one challenge when it comes to protecting the lives of our children. That's why we're adding another 120 speed cameras at schools around the city over the coming months – because we have to keep our children safe.

Vision Zero includes so many pieces. It includes the speed cameras – it includes lowering the speed limit to 25 miles per hour in this city, unless noted otherwise, because speeding has been the underlying reason that we've lost so many people. We're going to use all these tools. There's going to be a strong and consistent enforcement effort – again, TLC, DOT, NYPD, all working together.

And now we're about eight months in and we already see that when you talk about it, when you get people thinking about it, when you work with people, when you enforce, it really starts to make a difference. Pedestrian fatalities are down over 20 percent this year compared to last year – over 20 percent already.

[Applause]

And all fatalities – pedestrian, cyclist, motorcyclist all combined – are down almost eight percent. That means more people are walking the streets today alive and well because these policies are starting to work.

And again, you are all playing a crucial role – everyone up here is playing a crucial role, all of you are playing a crucial role – in this success. By being examples to everyone else in your industry, you're literally helping to save lives.

We'll never know exactly how each life was saved. We'll only know there are a lot more people alive because we took these actions. We'll never know when something you did saved a life or something you did set an example for someone else and they thought maybe they should be a little more careful and that saved a life. We won't know the specifics but we will know the achievement and we'll know it's something we've done together and something to be extraordinarily proud of.

So I want to just say to everyone here – I want to offer my appreciation, my respect for what you've achieved, my sense of gratitude on behalf of all New Yorkers, because what you are doing is affecting all of us; and my pledge to you that we will be with you, supporting you as you do your good work, and will always honor those who set an example for everyone else. So, my profound thanks to each and every one of you.

[Applause]

Because we're a multicultural city I'm going to offer just a few words in Spanish before I conclude.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

By the way, I think we should – we should just pull out those two words – con prudencia. With prudence, with wisdom is how you've handled this work – and for that, we are eternally thankful. Congratulations to everyone who's made the honor roll today.

[Applause]

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