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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON INSIDE CITY HALL

Josh Robin: Welcome back to Inside City Hall. We've been telling you about the State budget which includes a number of measures that will significantly increase State oversight of City Hall. Here now to weigh in on all of this for the first time since the budget was passed is Mayor de Blasio. Thanks so much for being here. Appreciate it.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thank you.

Robin: You haven't had the opportunity to talk publicly. This came out over the holiday weekend. I want to give you the opportunity. What's your take? Are you happy? Are you caught off guard?

Mayor: Well, it's a mixed bag. Look, let's start with the MTA. My central concern there was that we get a lock box. It's the first thing I said when the Governor did his State of the State address back in January. The first words out of my mouth were we need a lock box for any money that's generated for the MTA. We got a lock box. That's a good thing.

We got a clear, specific rule that the money could not be diverted away from the MTA. It's one of the things I've been complaining about for a long time. \$456 million that was taken away from the previous – in the previous budgets away from the MTA. That's now been stopped. We got the beginning of long-term funding for the MTA with the FHV plan, the for-hire vehicle.

Robin: For-hire vehicle.

Mayor: Right, the for-hire vehicle surcharges. That's progress. I don't think it is enough. I still believe the millionaire's tax and other measures will be needed for the long run but I think its real progress.

If you talk about something like NYCHA however, you know the Governor came out with a monitor. It's something we haven't – we literally got a few hours ago. We haven't even had a chance to digest what it means yet. But what's clear about it is he now is responsible for half-a-billion dollars that is owed to the City – the new money in the budget and the previous money in the 2015 and 2017 budgets that never came to the city.

He says he wants to do it through a monitor, okay. Show us the money because we've waiting for money as far back as 2015. I think in both cases this clarifies the governor's responsibility. He wanted it this way, okay he's got it this way. He now – it's abundantly clear he is 100 percent responsible for the MTA, he's got everything he wanted. He kept saying he wanted this money for the subway action plan, he's got it now. Time to put up, time to fix the MTA, time to take responsibility, no more excuses.

And on NYCHA, we've been asking him to just give us the money that was already previously committed in the State budgets. We never saw that money. Now he's put forward a formula that he says is the one he wants, great. Now he's responsible for giving NYCHA half a billion dollars so we can get on with the word of fixing it. Now remember, the City under my administration in the last four years – \$2.5 billion put into NYCHA for capital needs, \$1.6 billion for operating needs. It's great to see the State finally coming forward with some money. But I want to actually see the money arrive.

Robin: Okay, we have a lot to unpack. Is the monitor, does the City have to pay for that monitor? Is that your understanding?

Mayor: We literally got the wording a few hours ago, we're still analyzing it. So I don't want to comment until we've fully looked at it. Was it the kind of process that I would have done, if I were working with a partner and actually talked it through and tried to figure out what would work, no it was not that process. I don't think a monitor was the right idea. I think what would have actually helped was straight up designed-build authorization so we could speed along a host of NYCHA investments.

Robin: Which the City got?

Mayor: We got it with the monitor attached. So we don't know if that's going to have another layer of bureaucracy in slowness or not. We just don't know. But what would have helped directly would be to say the State had owed us hundreds of millions of dollars. They could have given us that money. They could have given us designed-build authorization right away so we could just move right away. So we could just move everything in the pipeline. Instead, they added this new layer with the monitor we still don't know exactly what that means yet.

Robin: You said a moment ago that it's now the Governor's time to give that \$500 million - the State to release that money –

Mayor: Right. Half a billion dollars that the State owes that.

Robin: Sure, but it isn't it presumably until after the monitor is appointed? Because the monitor then has to appoint a private contractor.

Mayor: Look, I find that a strange construct to begin with that somehow a monitor will decide on an individual private contractor. That's certainly not how things have been done in

government before in terms of making sure there is not anything improper or anything ineffective.

But again I am speaking hypothetically because we just got the wording; we're trying to understand what it means. What I fear is a whole lot of bureaucracy That it's going to take a certain amount of time to choose a monitor, and then monitor will take their time making decisions on things when we all the time, right now, we're making repairs at NYCHA. We've been putting in new roofs, we've been putting in new boilers. That work has been happening. Why would we want another layer of bureaucracy to slow us down?

Robin: Right but now it's the law.

Mayor: It is. I am just trying to be very clear. I don't think it was the right way to go. But I understand the legislator made a decision, they made a decision. We've work with it. I just fear it will be a slower process rather than quicker one. The quickest thing would have been just to give us design-build

Robin: Okay, we could talk about that for hours but let's move on to the MTA. The City is now paying more than \$400 million to the MTA. Why now? Did the fact that the State, under this legislation, said that it would take the money elsewhere if the City didn't put the \$400 million. Did that force your hand on this?

Mayor: No, no we look – this has been discussed for a long time.

Robin: But you said before that the Governor, as you mentioned before, that the Grosvenor has used the MTA like a piggy bank.

Mayor: Yeah, and I still think it unconscionable that \$456 million was taken out of the MTA. I'm still confused why that hasn't been more of a concern to everyone to go back and recoup that money and put it right back into the MTA. But the negotiating stance I took was to say we're not just going to give that money away without guarantees, without changes.

I do feel we've made some real progress. We have a lock box for the first time. And I don't remember any other situation more than there was a lock box, meaning that money raised in New York City had to stay in New York City for our subway and buses. We have a clause that says the money cannot be diverted out of the MTA and into the rest of the State budget. If we had that previously, all of that \$456 million would have been kept in the MTA. We've got at least the beginning of a long-term funding plan for the MTA because of the surcharges.

Based on that progress I was willing to put in the money. But let's be clear, it's one time only. Now, the governor has gotten everything he's asked for, great, take responsibility. My message is really clear. The MTA is his, he's in charge of it, he names the head of it, he decides the budget. Take responsibility, fix the subway, there is no more excuses; there is no more delays, just got do it.

Robin: But it's getting – we could talk about taxis in a moment, but the whole congestion pricing plan isn't in place. The City – the MTA still has a massive gap when it comes to the repairs that are needed. I mean, there are certainly going to be delays, even after the \$400 million that the City is releasing.

Mayor: Well again – but the Governor has to decide now what he wants to do. A lot of people agreed with me that a millionaire's tax would have been the thing to do. Look, when this Governor wants to get something through Albany, he has a pretty good batting average. I would have urged him to put all that energy into a millionaire's tax – he still could. If he prefers congestion pricing, he can go fight for that. But it's on him, that's the bottom line.

We have contributed. We – I think the way we contributed achieved some fundamental reforms that, bluntly, had we not held out, wouldn't have been there. There wouldn't a lock box, there still would be, unfortunately, that ability for the State to divert money. There wouldn't be the beginning of a funding stream.

We got something done here, but we're going to need a whole lot more, I agree with you. The immediate problems – there's no excuses on the immediate problems because they said here's the dollar figure, here's what we need. Okay, they have all the money. We're good for it, we'll pay our bills. They have all the money they need – go fix the immediate problems. The long-term – I think they could have done something on that already. But any way you slice it, there's only a few solutions on the table. Put together whatever combination you want – I think the millionaire's tax would be the single best. I think that should be a live discussion. I think if the Senate changes in November, that becomes an even more crucial decision.

Robin: Alright, we've got to get to Penn Station. This came out of nowhere last week. Explain a little bit about what your understanding is that the State can do. And given – I asked you this question about it late last week – you were pretty upset by it, your administration is – is the City going to sue, do you believe?

Mayor: The final language was so greatly reduced that it has relatively little impact. What should be of deep concern to anyone who cares about the environment, anyone who cares about making good decisions about land-use, to anyone who lives on the West Side of Manhattan, to anyone who lives in any municipality in this state – everyone should be concerned when they see this kind of attempt by the State to usurp the rights of localities and local people.

The original proposal was outrageous. it came out of nowhere. It had not been vetted with anyone. It met with a huge amount of opposition in the city and in Albany. So, I don't think you'll see that anytime soon. But what – the final product was very limited. We're going to carefully watch the situation, I'll tell you that much.

Robin: What is your understanding about what the State can now do?

Mayor: I don't think their fundamental rights have changes substantially because of this legislation. I think we're essentially where we were. I think if there's going to be progress on addressing Penn Station, it needs to be about increasing the capacity there. That's the central

issue for the future of New York City – is having the capacity with the tracks and the ability of Penn Station to handle a lot more trains. That's the central issue. We're ready to work with the State, with Amtrak, with the MTA, with everyone on that, but it cannot be done by the State trying to seize total power and avoiding environmental laws and land-use rules.

Robin: My reading on reports of this showed that the State now has more grounds to take properties under eminent domain. They have more power to do that.

Mayor: That's not our reading so far. We'll keep analyzing it –

Robin: This is benign? Is this a benign –

Mayor: Minimal impact –

Robin: Minimal impact, okay. Why don't we pause there? We have a bunch of other topics to take about. Let's take a quick break and I'll be right back with more from Mayor de Blasio. Stay with us.

Robin: Welcome back to Inside City Hall, I'm speaking to Mayor Bill de Blasio, we still have a lot to unpack here. Have you talked Governor Cuomo since this was all passed?

Mayor: Yeah I spoke to him earlier today.

Robin: And can you describe the conversation?

Mayor: I mean it's an ongoing conversation, I'm not going to get into details about it, but look I try to always tell him what I think is good for New York City and what isn't. I will always keep trying but obviously some of these things have to be fought out in other venues if we don't find cooperation.

Robin: You hadn't talk to him for a couple weeks –

Mayor: Correct.

Robin: Okay. Let's briefly talk about taxis. The yellow taxis are required to pay \$2.50, other cars are required to pay \$2.75, that's within – that's south of 96th street. You mentioned last week a cap on these for-hire vehicles, how serious are you about that?

Mayor: I'm serious.

Robin: I mean if you look at the yellow cab industry, it is collapsing, the price of a medallion that people bank their retirement and their kids' education on has plummeted as a result of these black cars.

Mayor: Yeah it's – look it's the technology, first and foremost that changed everything, and then the market, you know, consumer preference. There is still a very big place in this City for yellow

cabs. We've tried to help in a variety, of ways, we obviously have not had medallion sales to try to stabilize the market. We've tried to create more parity on things like disability rules. I tried for a cap two years ago, and I want people to remember that. I tried - I put a lot of energy and political capital into getting it and the Council was not willing to move forward. I think that was a mistake.

Then there was a study that we did that suggested maybe the problem wasn't so bad, then there's been new studies approved yes it was after all. So guess what? We were pressing it I guess. I'm happy to revisit it and something I'll certainly speak to the City Council about because we've got a massive congestion problem and we've got a problem afflicting the yellow cabs and the folks who have - you're right, they've worked their whole lives to have the value of that medallion, to see it plummet, is really tough on people and their families.

I think there is a lot to said for a cap, so let's go back and look at that again, that's something we'll have to do with the City Council.

Robin: Okay, so also briefly, you feel that red light cameras, it's not - you want it to be part of the - this is around school zones - you wanted it to be part of the state budget but there is still a session left until -

Mayor: Yeah and there's going to be a fight in that session. Look, you know, I would have loved to seen the speed cameras in the budget. I think that would have been the right thing to do because it's urgent, it's a matter of safety, we just lost two children in the horrible tragedy in Park Slope, and we lost another child before that earlier in the year. I don't know how many kids have to die before the legislators in Albany say okay of course we want cameras to stop speeding around schools.

When there's cameras around schools, speeding goes down 60 percent, that's what we found, 60. So why not just do it. Put the politics aside, think about human life and protecting people. I think there should be a huge fight in the legislative session - excuse me - session. I think the families are going to go up there to Families for Safe Streets, who've been a very potent force, they are going to each and every senator and argue for this.

The assembly has been supportive, we got to move the senate. I think there will be big fights in the legislative session - electoral reform, which I am going to fight for very hard, 50a reform, and criminal justice reform, speedy trial, bail reform, there are so many pieces that we want to win in the legislative session. I think a lot will be on the table, but speed cameras is going to be the thing with the most intense feeling because it's about saving the lives our children.

Robin: Right, okay, schools? The City now has to state what each school around the City gets according to state law. Is New York City being unfairly singled out?

Mayor: I think it's something of a game. I think there's a lot of politics behind it.

Robin: Who's playing the game?

Mayor: Obviously the Governor's part of it, the – look again, I never get that call that says how can we help you get the job done, what would make your life, as the City, work better. What would make the schools work better, what would make NYCHA look better, that never happens. A lot of politics, a lot of posturing, a lot of interference, a lot red tape, that's what I get.

Robin: But why is it bad for City officials to say, oh you know, this P.S. whatever gets this much and P.S. whatever gets this much.

Mayor: I'm okay with that. What – if that were the intention was simply the purity of information and trying to work on fairness, great, I'm not sure that's the intention. But we'll work with it. Let's be clear, if you really want equity and parity in our schools, then the State should what it was told by the highest court in New York State to do almost a decade ago and fund the campaign for fiscal equity settlement. If we have that money we can bring every school, in New York City, up to 100 percent standard in terms of the fair student funding formula. That's what I want to do, I can't do it alone, but I could do it if the state would just do what its highest court said to do. I don't know how a Governor, you know, doesn't follow the dictate o the highest court in his state –

Robin: But he says – he says that we don't know much each school spends how much each school is allotted within the City.

Mayor: We constantly report to Albany and we'll be happy to do this reporting as well, but we've reported consistently is how we have raised the floor year by year and brought that formula much closer to the parity. We've given a plan of how we would get it done quickly if we had the state funding.

But I will also emphasize, a lot of the biggest initiatives of this administration are in education, Pre-K, Free – K, Advanced Placement Courses for All, so many things we're doing disproportionately helped schools that had been struggling in the past and didn't get equal resources. Renewal, community schools, all of that is putting additional resources, so not only if we raise funding formula to try to create more parity across the board, we're putting a whole lot of specialized efforts in that help the least advantaged schools.

Robin: Okay, you met today with the new Chancellor –

Mayor: Yes.

Robin: At Katz's –

Mayor: Katz's deli.

Robin: Good – an inspired choice ...

Mayor: Oh yes. I mean look I am so excited to have Richard Carranza on board. And he's filled with energy and optimism for the school system. We talked about the key things we have to get done. And you know the number one word that kept being stated in the lunch was urgency. You

know, he's ready to hit the ground running. He knows he's got three years and nine months to take this school system to the next level. I am particularly focused on making sure 3-K for all becomes a reality. I'm particularly focused on making sure we get kids on grade level by third grade reading. Remember when we came into office fewer than 30 percent of kids were reading on grade level by third grade. We got that up a year ago to 41 percent. We want to keep driving that number up much more intensely. If you can get kids reading on grade level by third grade, that is the best predictor of a positive academic future. He feels this very passionately. So it was exciting, it was exciting to be around him today.

Robin: But you mention politics, he's not used to this New York politics.

Mayor: He's used to some pretty tough politics.

Robin: This is New York.

Mayor: Well we are very proud of everything is bigger and better here but first of all he was in Texas which had extraordinarily tough dynamics – a state government that was literally anti-public education, and a school board in his case that often divided. And he was in San Francisco, if you know something about San Francisco politics, it's not a walk in the park, it's highly factionalized and intense place.

So he knows his way around politics but what I have seen from Richard is, I think he has a tremendous sense of commitment and vision and a human ability to articulate it and win people over. I think teachers are going to love him, he's been a teacher his whole life. Principles are going to appreciate that he was a principle for many years. He can relate to our students, because you know he came up in a life where he had to really work hard for what he got. He happened to speak Spanish before he spoke English. He knows a lot about the immigrant experience and the experience of folks who struggle. I think he's going to be able to relate to parents. I mean it's – I think he brings a lot to the equation.

Robin: There was a report that Mark Peters, the Commissioner of the city's Department of Investigation fired the Schools Special Commissioner?

Mayor: Yes.

Robin: What do you know about that?

Mayor: I heard about it the same way you heard about it and was very concerned. This is a position that has always had an amount of independence and when I saw that I thought it was important to act and that's why I put out the executive order earlier today.

Robin: Okay. Is there anything you can do or is he entirely separate?

Mayor: Under the law I have the ability to put out an executive order to clarify his powers specifically. And I clarified that in the future he would only be able to choose someone for that educational role with my consent and he would only be able to remove them with my consent.

Robin: But this doesn't, this isn't retroactive, that person got fired?

Mayor: No it's effective immediately, it's effective today.

Robin: Okay, two questions very quickly. Hudson River Park, the Governor said last week that the City and State are each going to give \$50 million in the budget or at least that's what he's requesting. Is that something that you are acceding to?

Mayor: Yes there is some detail that's still being worked through. But we believe in the idea of parity funding for Hudson River Park, always have to agree on the specific projects to make sure that they are appropriate and they are environmentally sound and etcetera but we do believe in parity funding.

Robin: Okay, finally a little light heartedly – last week –

Mayor: I'll take some light hearted.

Robin: Alright well last week you gave the impression that you had never been to Yankee Stadium.

Mayor: I didn't say I had never been. As Mayor, they said would you go? I said no.

Robin: Okay, so you did, you were Mayor-Elect, you remember going with Mike Bloomberg?

Mayor: Yes.

Robin: Okay.

Mayor: Yes, yes. Even before that, I've been many times.

Robin: Okay.

Mayor: No, no. I was asked, was I planning to go? I said I would not go but I want to clarify, if they win – which is a distinct possibility this year, they have a hell of a line up, if they win the championship we will give them an amazing parade, I'll give them the keys to the city, all of those good things. But I just, life is too short to go to the other team's stadium and have that experience.

Robin: Not even as the Mayor going on Opening Day? Like as a ceremonial role?

Mayor: Oh come on.

Robin: No?

Mayor: Fans are fans and they know who I am a fan of. I don't think we are talking about a good experience for anyone. But it is all good. I am a true baseball fan. I have a lot of respect for the Yankees. If they win I will honor them appropriately.

Robin: Okay, are you going to hold your nose while doing it or wear a Red Sox hat?

Mayor: No, I'm not that stupid. I'm not going to wear a Red Sox hat. I'm a true Red Sox fan, you know I am who I am. But, no if they win, you know they put together a great team, if they win they are deserving of praise but long time between here and then.

Robin: Okay, long summer. Thank you Mayor, I appreciate it.

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