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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, everybody. It is a really beautiful day in New York City, and there's a lot to celebrate. It's Streets Week, all week – with an exclamation point, maybe two – all week here at City Hall as we focus on safe streets, streets for the people, all sorts of new approaches to our street scape. And it's national bike month, and I celebrated by getting on a Citi Bike this morning and riding to work from Gracie Mansion down to City Hall. And great experience, thanks to everyone who came along on the ride. And just beautiful, another way of seeing the city coming back to life, another way of seeing the incredible recovery – all the energy all along the route, and a lot more to come this amazing summer of New York City ahead. Today, we're going to talk about bikes. We're going to talk about buses. And we're going to talk about making this city move ahead and keeping our recovery rolling more and more every day.

Now, first let's talk about vaccinations, as we always do. The vaccination effort keeps coming on strong. As of today, 7,152,660 doses have been given from the very beginning of our effort, more every day. And for comparison, that is more doses than there are people in the whole State of Arizona. I love those comparisons. So, we're going to continue to encourage vaccination in all sorts of new ways. We're going to make it easier. We're going to make it something that people find really convenient. And we're going to make it more fun and we're to be offering incentives. Here's another incentive today, we're announcing free two-week membership to Citi Bike – two-week membership for free when you get vaccinated. That is a really good deal. If you have not gotten vaccinated yet, what a great time to walk in or to make an appointment and take advantage of that opportunity.

Now, that's something we're starting right away. And this coming Thursday, something new as well for folks who drive cars – a drive-through site at Citi Field. And this is an addition to the vaccination site in the stadium itself. We've already given 100,000 shots at Citi Field, it's been amazing – absolutely amazing. And now, we're going to make it easy for folks to just come on over, get a shot, and keep moving. So, what a great place to get vaccinated and help protect yourself, your family, and your whole city.

All right. Now, let's talk about this Streets Week all week, and it is crucial to a recovery for all of us. When we talk about recovery for all of us, it means everyone has to get around, everyone has to be safe. It means a city that moves and moves the right way. And it means doubling down on Vision Zero. And it certainly remains means reducing our dependence on fossil fuels. A recovery for all of us means thinking about our future and dealing with climate change and New York City doing everything we can to break our dependence on fossil fuels. So, that means doing everything we can and to make mass transit work, to make bicycling work. And we're going to talk about some of those things today. Today, focus on buses and bikes.

So, 2020, of course, we saw a bike boom across New York City. We want to keep it rolling, we want to keep it growing. Last year, even amidst a pandemic, the City of New York built 29 miles – 29 miles of protected bike lanes. And this year we will surpass that total. We will build over 30 miles this year, during 2021, of protected bike lanes. To-date 133 miles of protected bike lanes in New York City. We're now going to add a lot more in the course of 2021, to make this the even safer for bicyclists. And we've got more coming, dramatic changes we talked about in the State of the City – entire new lanes devoted to bikes on the Brooklyn Bridge and the Queensboro Bridge. And, of course, something exciting I talked about in the State of City, bike boulevards for the first time ever in New York City. And, today, I'm going to announce where the first bike boulevards will be in all five boroughs – 21st Street in Brooklyn, South slope in Brooklyn; 39th Street in Sunnyside, Queens; Jackson Avenue in Mott Haven in the Bronx; University Place – my beloved University Place where I lived in a dorm for several years at NYU, of course, that's in Lower Manhattan; and Netherland Avenue on Staten Island. So, these bike boulevards, they're going to come with a variety of measures to make it a safe environment for bicyclists and connect key bike lanes to each other. So, this is all about creating a cyclist-friendly, pedestrian-friendly environment, making it easier for folks to get around from one part of the city to the other. And this is one part of a bigger strategy to make biking always easier, always safer.

And it connects with Vision Zero, of course, because Vision Zero works. When we focus on safety and we focus on getting people onto bikes, onto mass transit. And speaking of mass transit – today, I'm going to announce a new commitment to our buses. You know, it's been a really good thing the last few years – people are talking more about buses. We all, rightfully, also focused on the subways. The subways get a whole lot of attention. They should. I've ridden the subways my whole life. I get it, but buses didn't get the attention they deserve until, it feels, to me, like the last few years. And I'm glad we're talking about a more, and it's time to do more and more speed up the travel of New Yorkers on buses to make it easier. So, for 2021 – here's today's pledge for the year 2021 – we will complete 28 miles – 28 miles of new and improved busways and bus lanes that will serve 1,000,000 riders on a daily basis. This is why we really do need to talk about buses more, the sheer numbers are staggering. These changes that we will make will serve a million New Yorkers. So, we're really excited. This'll be the largest number of miles in our history for combining new and improved busways and bus lanes. It's going to help move the city forward. It's going to help spark our recovery. Now, busways – look, it was a bold idea. I'm really glad we did it. It worked. It continues to work. It is just clearly a success story. The busway on 14th Street led the way. Just a week or two ago, I was up in Washington Heights, the new busway on 181st Street – fantastic. The busway on Main Street, Queens, they're working. And we're now going to double down, go farther. And we're going to focus on the Bronx, in particular, because so many working families in the Bronx are bus riders. They need to get where they're going, need to get to work. They need to get back home. They need time with their families. They need their lives to be a little easier. These changes are going to make a big difference.

Here to tell you more about it, our Transportation Commissioner, Hank Gutman.

Commissioner Henry Gutman, Department of Transportation: Thank you very much, Mr. Mayor. And it is a treat to be here with you at City Hall to celebrate Streets Week. And I'm particularly happy to be talking about both buses and bikes. First, for the bus riders – last June, the Mayor announced Better Buses Restart, the red carpet to recovery. And, as the Mayor said, we are now setting a new record this year. We are building or improving 28 miles of better bus

projects. And these routes, as the Mayor pointed out, serve nearly 1,000,000 riders each year. We always talk in terms of mileage, but, to me, the more important metric is how many people's lives are you improving? And the answer is that these programs are improving lives, because they are increasing bus speeds. To take two examples that the Mayor referenced, the Main Street busway – the speeds are 29 percent faster in the evening rush hours, Highland Boulevard on Staten Island, the buses are between 28 and 71 percent faster during peak hours. So, these things make a difference.

With the MTA support, we will this year complete five busways, improving service for 657,000 daily riders. Main Street's completed. 181st Street, where the Mayor and I were last week, is completed, and already it's saving 30 percent in terms of bus speeds. One new announcement, Jamaica Avenue and Archer in Jamaica, two busways in downtown Jamaica. This is a huge transportation hub, and this will affect many hundreds of thousands of commuters, and dramatically improve their access to public transportation. And then the fifth is Fifth Avenue in Manhattan. We already have two bus lanes, but we are planning steps to improve that even further to make bus service on Fifth Avenue, which is a very heavily trafficked bus route, even more efficient for New Yorkers.

Speaking of the Bronx, we're talking about more bus lanes, bus boarding islands to make getting on and off the bus safer for the passengers, protected bike lanes and pedestrian safety improvements. We're also introducing technology to give priority to buses in terms of traffic lights. We're doing that at over 300 locations. If you're looking to improve bus speeds, getting the traffic out of the way is a start, but if they then have to stop at stoplights, that doesn't help. So, we're using modern technology to increase efficiency in that way too. And then, on Fordham Road and Pelham Bay Park Station, both of those are being newly transformed for bus riders.

We also have new and improved bus lanes in Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island. New red paint marking, signals improvements, pedestrian safety measures, clearer signage – these include projects on First and Second Avenues, Battery Place on Avenues A and D in Manhattan, Merrick Boulevard in Queens, and Highland Boulevard in Staten Island. So, we've got a lot of work we're doing on buses and busways. And, as the Mayor said, it's critically important that we pay attention to this means of transportation that's so important to so many of our fellow New Yorkers.

Second, for the cyclists, we will be meeting the target of 30 miles of protected bike lanes – not just bike lanes, protected bike lanes, which from a safety perspective and a Vision Zero perspective, obviously, is a big difference. This is a new record. We are also, as the Mayor announced, introducing new bike boulevards in each borough. In Manhattan, we want to help workers return to business districts, better connect to the Queensboro and Brooklyn Bridges, which, by the way, will have their own dedicated bike lanes. On the Brooklyn Bridge, it's going to be done this this fall and we're looking forward to riding it. And then, efforts in the Bronx to expand protected bike lane network and focus on cyclist safety. And we will be adding new cyclist access to parks and greenways all over the city. As the Mayor said, we are trying to make this a more effective bike network, not just isolated bike streets and bike pathways.

So, thank you, Mr. Mayor. We have much to do, but we've made substantial progress and the goals are terrific and we look forward to achieving them this year. Thank you.

Mayor: Thank you so much, Hank. Appreciate it. So, everyone, that's a great summary of all the changes, all the improvements we're making as part of Streets Week, continuing to spur on the recovery of New York City. Now, let's talk about another piece of recovery, because I always say a recovery for all of us means many things. And a lot of times you think about jobs, it definitely includes jobs, it definitely includes bringing back our economy strong. We are well on the way to reviving our economy and you can see the activity all over New York City, but there's a lot of work to do. There's a lot of work to do in 2021, and to build the future beyond. Now, we need a recovery for all of us, so it means as to reach every neighborhood, all five boroughs. It can't just be about one part of the city, it has to be for everyone. And to achieve that kind of lasting recovery that reaches deeply, that lifts people up, that gives opportunity to folks who haven't had it before, we need a strong and capable leader who believes in those values and knows how to get things done.

I'm going to introduce you in a moment to the new President and CEO of the New York City Economic Development Corporation. But first, I want to give you a sense of the work she's already done for New York City. She joined EDC in 2018 as Chief Operating Officer, and joined an amazing organization. I want to thank everyone at EDC – tremendous work, constant work by EDC to improve this city, to create jobs, to spur on our economy, to build things that need to be built for our city. But that was before the pandemic. When the pandemic came, everyone at EDC was asked to do an entirely different mission to help New York City through the great unknown, to create things that have never been created here before, because we needed them. We needed ventilators, we needed PPE. We needed things to be produced here in New York City, because we couldn't depend on any place else. And so, the Economic Development Corporation swung into action and helping to lead that effort was Rachel Loeb every step of the way with a can-do spirit, with an innovative approach, recognizing the incredible partners in the city, our academic institutions, our companies, our hospitals, all of these great partners brought together in our hour of need to create extraordinary new resources for the people in New York City and to save lives. That's part of Rachel's story. But another thing to understand about Rachel is she has a big vision for where we to go. She was one of the people created the notion of New York City becoming the public health capital of the world, of our life sciences industry taking off and challenging all the other great life sciences centers in America, and making New York City ever more sustainable and a center for the effort to fight climate change. All of this can be done as part of recovery for all of us, but it takes great leaders, and smart leaders, can-do leaders. My pleasure to introduce the new President and CEO of the New York City Economic Development Corporation Rachel Loeb.

President and CEO Rachel Loeb, Economic Development Corporation: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. And I also want to thank Deputy Mayor Been. I am really honored at this remarkable opportunity to continue to serve the city of New York and work together with you as we build a recovery for all of us. EDC is focused on bringing New York City back – back to the lively city that we all love and back better than before. We spent most of the last 14 months focused on responding to the pandemic. And at EDC, we were proud to play an important role in that. As COO at EDC during COVID, I was proud to support this important emergency work. We turned cruise terminals into hospitals. We converted construction sites into food distribution networks. We partnered with the private sectors to bring PPE, test kits, and ventilators all constructed and built right here in New York City. When we needed a lab so that New Yorkers could get their test results in 24 hours, we did it. And now, we're helping to distribute vaccines around the city.

But now, as EDC President, we turn our focus to the economy and to the recovery. And I've seen firsthand how much EDC can do. We continue to build affordable housing in every borough. We continue to create joyful open spaces and invest in critical infrastructure, like broadband. We are going to make sure that we ensure that our fresh food distribution system goes on. And we're going to make sure as one of the city's largest landlords that our tenants have the ability to bounce back. And we're creating new public-private partnerships to create opportunities, to bring new companies, and new industries to New York City.

But we know that there is no economic health without public health, which is why we want to make sure that New York City is the public health capital of the world. And we're creating the public the pandemic health – sorry, the Pandemic Response Institute, so that the city can be ready for the next health emergency. And with Mayor de Blasio's vision, we are doubling down on our life sciences investments, creating research and manufacturing clusters throughout the city, which will drive innovation in health and science breakthroughs, bringing together and supporting some of the greatest minds that are located right here in the city and those innovators so we can bring those solutions to market. And we're going to make investments in emergent technologies, like offshore wind. We're planning for the future, a sustainable future that includes all New Yorkers. So, we're going to draw on the deep talent pool that exists in New York City and make sure that there's training and opportunities for all New Yorkers to participate in this, as well as create new opportunities for all the amazing entrepreneurs that exist throughout the city.

The task before us are many and it is my pleasure and honor to serve among – with my EDC staff – they're some of the most amazing public servants I know – to make sure that we all work together for an equitable and sustainable New York. And, Mr. Mayor, I am proud to serve alongside you and alongside and EDC's new board chair, and to join you in your vision to create a recovery for all of us. Thank you so much.

Mayor: Thank you, Rachel. Congratulations to you. Rachel Loeb and our new chair, Danny Meyer teaming up, a dynamic duo and teaming up at a perfect moment to help bring this city back strong. And there is so much potential. We're already the greatest city in the world, but we have the potential to go much, much farther. And that's what we're going to start to build in 2021, and then go farther from there.

So, the good news is, as we're talking about our comeback every day we talk about our indicators. And boy are our indicators speaking to us. We always are led by the data and the science. Well, the data is saying some really good things to us, and it's all about what all of you did to fight back COVID. So, let's look at the indicators today. Number one, daily number of people, excuse me – daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19. Today's report, 83 patients. Look at that number. Look at that graph. 83 patients. Confirmed positivity level 28.92 percent. So, it keeps going down. Let's keep it that way. Now. hospitalization rate, 1.25 per 100,000. Well, well below the threshold and going down. Number two, new reported cases on a seven-day average. Today's report is 774 cases. So, downward slope, well done, New York City. And number three, percentage of people testing citywide positive for COVID-19, today's report on a seven-day rolling average, 1.95 percent. So, we are under two percent and going south. This is fantastic. Let's keep pushing that number down for the good of all of us. Now, a few words in Spanish. I'm going back to the top. We got Streets Week and bikes and Vision Zero.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that. Let's turn to our colleagues in the media and please let me know the name outlet of each journalist.

Moderator: Good morning. We will now begin our Q and A. As a reminder, we are joined by the Commissioner of the Department of Transportation Hank Gutman, Rachel Loeb, the President and CEO of EDC, Jee Mee Kim Chief Strategy Officer of the Department of Transportation, Health Commissioner Dr Chokshi, and President and CEO of the New York City Health + Hospitals Dr. Mitch Katz. First up, we have Juan Manuel from NY1.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor. How are you?

Mayor: Good, Juan Manuel. How are you doing today?

Question: Very good, thank you.

Mayor: Where were you on our bike ride? We expected you, Juan Manuel.

Question: I'm sorry. I'm sorry, I couldn't make it. But I was surprised that it took you almost a year to get on a bike. Many New Yorkers started biking last year during the pandemic.

Mayor: Better late than never, brother.

Question: That's great. So, Mr. Mayor after all the city went through with a pandemic, what does it say about those who are still refusing to get the vaccine now? The City is offering free stuff to those people to encourage them to get the vaccine. But what does it say about those people and how – what's going to happen if New York City doesn't reach herd immunity, because you have a lot of New Yorkers who don't want to get the shot?

Mayor: It's a very, very important question Juan Manuel. So, just to put things in perspective, as of today, we've got 3.8 million people who've gotten at least one dose. And there's constant activity every day, tens of thousands of people getting vaccinated every day. I think the incentives are going to help. I think getting doctors and pediatricians into dialogue with their patients are going to help. I think there's more and more information getting around and answers to questions, that's going to help. I think you're going to see just consistent improvement in that number. But we've never had the assumption that every single person would get vaccinated. I think what we need is the functional reality, Juan Manuel of a city that gets safer all the time, healthier all the time, and can reopen fully. And that's what we're getting right now. I mean, you see it in the indicators. The amount of vaccination we've achieved already is having a profound impact. And there's many, many more people who are going to get vaccinated. So, I really believe, and my colleagues and I have talked about this a lot, that most people who have not gotten vaccinated are still people who would be willing to get vaccinated, but we need to make it easy. We need to make it convenient. We need to make it fun. And that's how we're going to move people. Go ahead, Juan Manuel.

Question: I ask you every week when I get a chance to ask you questions on these press conferences, any thoughts on the mayoral race right now? How are you feeling –

Mayor: Did we lose him? There we go. Go ahead, we lost you for a second.

Question: Yes. Have you settled on that candidate for mayor among all the Democratic candidates? Are you closer to pick your favorite candidate?

Mayor: Juan Manuel, you get points for persistence. I can safely tell you I'm not going to announce an endorsement in answer to a question spontaneously. So, but I admire the effort. I really do. I'm obviously watching the race very carefully. I know we've got about six weeks left. If I choose to say something, there's plenty of time left for that. But I don't have an assumption yet. I'm watching very, very carefully. And I want to know, you know, who's going to be able to continue our recovery and continue to build equity and fairness in the city? So, stay tuned.

Moderator: Next. We have Juliet Papa from 1010 WINS.

Question: Hey, good morning, Mr. Mayor. How was your bike ride?

Mayor: The bike ride was great. Now, do we have your real true elegant voice Juliet because last week it didn't sound like you.

Question: I know it sounded underwater. I hope so.

Mayor: You sound better today.

Question: Okay, thank you. You know, so I did want to ask a question about the bike lanes, given that more will be installed. Will there come a time when there are bike lanes that are one way or two way? Because so often we see bike lanes where bikes are going, you know, opposite traffic, pedestrians are stepping off the curb and, you know, really have to look every which way for these bikes to come. And there seems to be very little enforcement or at least an effort to stop at red lights? So, what can be done about that to make them safer not only for the bicyclists, but for pedestrians?

Mayor: It's a really good question, Juliet. And it's one, I've heard at many, many town hall meetings over the years. And I think the answer is to keep working at it, to continue to educate because everyone needs to be educated about the right way to keep each other safe. I think enforcement definitely helps and there is enforcement. And it makes an impact, but I think we have to keep targeting it right. And building an approach in terms of how the bike lanes are constructed and how everything is developed, an intersection to maximize understanding for everyone, of how to proceed safely. So, you know, we're evolving. I could see on my ride this morning, you know, places that were working better, places that were working less well. But we're evolving and it's something we have to keep at. But I'll tell you, I think a city that works for bicyclists and a city that works for pedestrians, that's what Vision Zero is all about. Actually, honoring folks who are not just in cars and protecting them. And I think overwhelmingly the approach we're taking has worked, but we got to keep refining it. Go ahead, Juliet.

Question: Okay. Thank you. Different subject, SUNY and CUNY, they're requiring vaccines for students returning to school this September. Will you be requiring that for New York City public

school students as well? And if so, would you make vaccination sites available at the schools? And also, would you require teachers to be vaccinated?

Mayor: No. Across the board Juliet. We are seeing extraordinary success right now in our schools. And this is before we've been able to vaccinate our kids. We're really excited that now we'll be able to start doing that. But no, the schools have been incredibly safe because of all the health and safety measures, that gold standard of health and safety measures we put together. I'm really excited about the fall. I think we're going to be in much, much better shape then, than we even are now in terms of the overall COVID situation. So, we look forward to welcoming back every single student. There'll be lots of health and safety measures in place. I think you'll see a lot of students and a lot of staff vaccinated by then. But I think that's the right way to go about it.

Moderator: Next we have Henry Goldman from Bloomberg.

Question: Hell, Mr. Mayor. It's good to see you. How are you doing today?

Mayor: I am feeling invigorated, Henry. Nothing like a good bike ride in the morning. How are you?

Question: Absolutely. I wanted to follow up on Juliet's question because such a huge effort was made to vaccinate kids against measles. And the enforcement was pretty vigorous. [Inaudible] a similar compulsory policy toward COVID vaccinations?

Mayor: You know, talked about it with the health team, Henry. We just don't think it's the right way to go at this moment. I mean, we'll watch always, we'll always be led by the data and the science, but right now, again, we're seeing extraordinary success. And we expect that success to be sustained. And there's lots – there's four months to get lots and lots more people vaccinated. I think we're on the right track. If anything changes, we will certainly be open to making adjustments. Go ahead, Henry.

Question: Okay. I mean it only takes a few fatal cases of COVID in a child to turn this into a crisis. But the other question I've got is a follow up on a question that Andrew Siff asked yesterday about these lower numbers and this downward slope mirroring the experience of almost exactly a year ago. Where we had a very steep, downward slope and we achieved numbers like this. And then all of a sudden they skyrocketed up. And the answer that Dr. Chokshi gave was twofold maybe, vaccines, and also that there was a lockdown, maybe it was Dr. Katz who said that. That the lockdown was the difference between then and now. But there is a recent study from the University of Chicago that says that the lockdown may in fact increased the rate and incidence of viral spread, the people in their households spreading the disease. And this University of Chicago study said really the workplaces in many ways were safer than keeping people locked down in their households. I'm wondering whether Dr. Chokshi has any thoughts about that whole policy of locking down, keeping people in homes was actually not as effective in stopping the spread as was previously believed?

Mayor: Henry, I'll turn to Dr. Chokshi and Dr. Katz. I'll only say, and I think that's a really good and fair question that you asked and Andrew asked. But I would really point out, you know, again, in a city where we have 3.8 million people have received at least one dose, and we all know that even one dose has an impact, in terms of protecting people. We're in a really different

situation than we were a year ago. For that reason alone, that is just a staggering number on its own. So, I appreciate the effort of comparison, but I think it's really apples and oranges. But with that, I will now turn to the experts. Dr. Chokshi followed by Dr. Katz.

Commissioner Dave Chokshi, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: Thank you, sir. And thanks Henry, for the important question. I haven't read the University of Chicago study that you're referring to. But what I can tell you is that the preponderance of the evidence does indicate that measures that decreased mobility, that decreased you know, mixing have helped to curb the spread of the coronavirus. Not just in New York City's experience, but now born out across the country and around the world as well. But the Mayor made the most important point, which is that the key difference between 2021 and last year is that we now have an opportunity to create a more protective buffer against the virus. And that's through vaccination. And that's why we're going to remain laser focused on getting as many people vaccinated as possible, particularly while the numbers remain low to prevent any resurgence in the future.

Mayor: Thank you. Dr. Katz?

President and CEO Mitchell Katz, NYC Health + Hospitals: I agree that vaccination has made a huge difference and not just here, but in other countries, such as Israel that have achieved high rates of vaccination, have found that you can then have much more activity. The way we see our beautiful New York bursting with energy again. And despite all the activity and the intermixing, the rates are going down. And I think that's the tremendous success of vaccination. Thank you, sir.

Mayor: Thank you.

Moderator: Next we have Katie Honan from the Wall Street Journal.

Question: Hey, good morning, Mayor de Blasio. How are you doing?

Mayor: Katie, I just feel like we had a very special experience together.

Question: We got to ride, we got to ride bikes. I know. And when you ride to Queens soon, which you'll – I'm sure you'll do. We can all ride together. We can go on the Queens Boulevard bike lane.

Mayor: You know, I like – Katie, you keep pushing the spectrum. I already said Ocean Parkway. Now you're going to get me to Queens. It's just going to keep going from there. Isn't it?

Question: Yeah. You could ride – five borough bike tour. My question is a little – it's a little bit more serious. It's about the police budget. I know that there's a hearing right now at the Council taking a look at the police budget. I know last year there was a big push to cut it significantly, but we haven't really seen those types of cuts. And additionally, you know, there is this idea of, at least a perception of severe increased crime and how it could affect the city. So, I just wanted to get your take on the role of police and its budget in the city's longer-term recovery.

Mayor: Katie, you know, we just graduated a class, NYPD class, this last week, 850 new officers. That's going to help us a lot as we get ready for the summer. I think the size of the

NYPD is the right size now. And I think that's what we should do going forward. Take the size of the NYPD we have now, double down on neighborhood policing and precision policing, re-bond the NYPD with communities which we see a lot of already. I saw it, you know, at the Wagner Houses in East Harlem on Friday. And that's how we're going to move forward. So, I think we're at the right level as we speak now. Go ahead, Katie.

Question: The other part of that was just taking a look at whether, you know, this idea of increased crime could affect the city's recovery in terms of tourism. I know you answered it a little bit yesterday, but I mean, overall. That was part of the first question.

Mayor: Yeah, Katie, again, I think it's two separate questions. So, I'm going to answer this as the second question. The impact on tourism, I truly believe that the recovery is moving intensely. You see it all over the city – activity everywhere, jobs coming back. I think people want to come to New York City. There's a tremendous pent-up desire to come here. Our job is to keep everyone safe. That's what happens every single day. I, honestly, I'm sad – I'm really sad whenever there's an incident, we always have to do everything we can to stop that from happening. And we have to make sure that anyone who is a perpetrator is brought to justice, but I do not think it changes the basic view that people around the world have of New York City, that they know it's an extraordinary place and they want to be here.

Moderator: Next, we have Amanda from Politico.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor, how are you?

Mayor: Good, Amanda, how you doing?

Question: I'm doing great. Thank you. I want to talk to you a little bit more about vaccines. So, I'm still hearing from health care workers and you know, other New Yorkers that they're still concerned about getting the vaccine because it's not FDA approved, and that's kind of where they're getting stuck on. And I was wondering with the potential for the FDA to actually approve the vaccine, not just have it as emergency use, are you expecting an increase in people who are going to come out and get vaccinated? Is that part of the strategy with getting five million New Yorkers vaccinated by next month?

Mayor: Amanda, I'll start, and I'll turn to Dr. Katz and then Dr. Chokshi so they can talk about their experience with health care workers. I think that will help, but I think it's part of a continuum, if you will. With every passing month, we see more and more people who were at one point or another, either hesitant or had questions or just weren't ready to get around to it, who then, you know, decide it's time. Or someone makes it easy like when we were with the mobile vaccination bus up in the Bronx on Friday. And people like literally just – there's a moment where people are like, okay, now I'm ready. I think you're going to see more and more of that, but I do agree that any additional validation of the vaccine helps. Dr. Katz then Dr. Chokshi.

President Katz: Thank you, sir. Every single day, we have people at all our hospitals who come forward for vaccination, who haven't been vaccinated before. And I think it's exactly what you say, sir, people are watching, they're seeing that people who've been vaccinated are not only

protected, but they're not having serious side effects. And so, they're coming forth for vaccination. And I think that will continue into the future. Thank you, sir.

Mayor: Thank you. Dr. Chokshi about – and particularly about health care workers.

Commissioner Chokshi: Certainly, sir. And, and just to add to what Dr. Katz has said, that's been my experience as well, talking to my fellow clinicians and other health care workers is not so much about getting to FDA approval but just having a bit of time to have seen how the vaccine is experienced by other health care workers, you know, particularly hearing their stories about why they chose to get vaccinated, understanding that the vast majority of side effects are mild, and working through that process, you know, for themselves. With respect to the timeline for a full FDA approval, I did want to mention that, you know, I do expect that the vaccines that are currently under the emergency use authorization will subsequently get that full FDA approval. Pfizer submitted their application for a full approval on May 7th, last Friday. And so that's currently under review by the FDA, and we'll be hearing more about that in the coming months.

Mayor: Thank you. Go ahead, Amanda.

Question: Okay. Thank you all. So, I'm looking at the city's vaccine coverage by ZIP code. And I'm seeing that there are some neighborhoods in Brooklyn, particularly the Orthodox Jewish neighborhoods of like Midwood, Crown Heights, South Williamsburg that are around like 36 to 40 percent vaccination which is a little bit lower than a lot of parts of the city. And so, I've spoken to some Orthodox Jews who told me the reason why they were getting vaccinated was because they want to go to Israel and that's their main value and driver that's getting them vaccinated. And I was curious a little bit more the strategy on getting this particular population vaccinated considering it's pretty low versus the citywide average.

Mayor: Yeah, Amanda, I would simply say we'll use any variety of approaches for any given neighborhood. Look, if that's a message that helps to encourage people, then that's a great message to use in those communities. We obviously want trusted community leaders joining in and certainly in the Orthodox community, we've had tremendous support from community organizations from rabbis, from elected officials, encouraging people originally get tested now to get vaccinated. So, I think that is a great message. And it's one that we'll certainly join in spreading.

Moderator: Next, we have Paul Liotta from the Staten Island Advance.

Question: Hey, good morning, Mr. Mayor, how are you?

Mayor: Good, Paul, how you been?

Question: I'm well, thank you. Just had a couple of transportation-related questions. First regarding hiring for the ferry. I'm hoping to get a sense of when the DOT got a sense of the need and when it started hiring, when it started that process?

Mayor: I will turn to Commissioner Gutman, and the Chief Strategy Officer of DOT Jee Mee Kim is with us as well and see if either one of them has an update. But what I'll tell you, Paul, is

we're – obviously, Staten Island Ferry is crucial to Staten Island. We're looking at it right now as we plan on recovery. So, we're looking at the approach, the schedule, hiring, etcetera, and we'll have more to say on that in the next few days. My goal, of course, is for July 1st to see a full reopening in New York City. So, we're working towards that as we speak. Commissioner or Jee Mee, do you want to add at all?

Commissioner Gutman: Sure. I mean, it's a good question. We have been urgently trying to hire to fill the needs ever since that became possible as the recovery began. And we are optimistic about being able to resume a full schedule on the schedule that the Mayor outlined. The complication here is that filling these positions requires us to find people whose skill sets meet the various regulatory requirements, including the Coast Guard, etcetera, etcetera. And it's not a buyer's market when it comes to people who can fill those skilled positions. So, we're working at it as fast as we can. And it's certainly our objective to do it as quickly as we can find the people. The further complication I would point out is we're also bringing on the new line of Ollis ferries, and we don't want to delay that. So, we've got a lot of needs and a limited talent pool, but we're going to do everything humanly possible to meet our commitments in each of those areas.

Mayor: Thank you. Go ahead, Paul.

Question: And just secondly, on the bike boulevard for Netherland Avenue, I understand that, you know, renderings of it will be made available in the future, but I'm hoping to get a sense of how that specific street was chosen. It's predominantly residential, gets very narrow at certain points. Just, you know, how did the City choose Netherland Avenue?

Mayor: Jee Mee, do you want to speak to that?

Chief Strategy Officer Jee Mee Kim, Department of Transportation: [Inaudible] hear me okay?

Mayor: There you go.

Chief Kim: Okay. Hello. It was – by the way, really enjoyed our ride this morning. I'm impressed with your cycling skills.

Mayor: You know, Jee Mee it's like – it's like riding a bicycle. You never forget, you know –

Chief Kim: No, your fitness levels are right up there. It was a lot of fun. Netherland Avenue – so, the bike boulevard, you know, is really intended to, you know, make biking more accessible and easier, but with the secondary effect of calming traffic and making the experience better for pedestrians. So, we chose Netherland Avenue, it's a small street, as you mentioned, it works very well as an alternative route for cyclists compared to Forest Avenue. It slows down the cut-through traffic, so it allows us to improve safety and provide better cycling access to the new bike paths on the Goethals and Bayonne Bridge.

Mayor: Thank you very much. Very clear answer. And you're a good bicyclist, too. All right.

Moderator: We have time for two more questions today. The next question goes to Felipe from TV Globo.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor. Good morning.

Mayor: Good morning, Felipe. How are you?

Question: Fine. Thank you. Our network is from Brazil. And last week you announced the possibility of a vaccine for tourists. This caught our attention because Brazilians have always been among the international tourists that visit New York. The most I'd like to know how is the negotiation with the State to have this approval? Is there a real chance to make it happen? And if so, when?

Mayor: Yes, the State has approved, Felipe. So, this is something we're doing already. We're setting up mobile vaccination opportunities for tourists in some of the best trafficked parts of New York City, the places that tourists love to go. And look, I think it's part of the welcome back to New York City. We want everyone to be safe and obviously my heart goes out to the people of Brazil. There's been so much pain, so much difficulty. I think anything we can do if anyone's visiting us to show a welcome and show the fact that we care about everyone who's here, even someone who's temporarily with us, we want to help out. So, I'm excited to say that vaccination for tourists is ready to go. Go ahead, Felipe.

Question: Thank you. And aren't you afraid that people who live in this city will not be happy since the American taxpayers who are paying for the vaccines?

Mayor: No, Felipe. I do not feel that. If people – and when we say tourists, we mean tourists from all over the United States of America and from other countries. We want tourists to come back. Part of the lifeblood of the New York City economy. We welcome them back. We had historic levels of tourism before the pandemic, as many as 67 million tourists in a single year. We want that to come back and I think rolling out the red carpet, welcoming people back, saying if you need to be vaccinated, we want to help you out, is just a smart thing to do. It's also a kind thing to do, a generous thing to do. That's who we are as New Yorkers.

Moderator: Our last question of the day goes to Abu from Bangla Patrika.

Question: Hello, Mayor. How are you?

Mayor: Hey, Abu, how you been?

Question: Good. Thank you so much. So, my first question is, you know, you are offering the incentives to the people who are going to get vaccinated right now, but people like you, me, and others who got the vaccine before, they're asking what is our incentive from New York?

Mayor: I mean, I think the idea is that folks who wanted to get vaccinated, who were ready from the beginning, we made it available all over the city. It was for free. I mean, I think that was a very, very positive outcome. But for folks who need to be encouraged, I think the incentives make sense and it's – look, some people need a little extra encouragement, but it's in all of our

interest for them to get vaccinated. So, I think if this is now the right time for incentives it feels like the smart thing to do. Go ahead, Abu.

Question: Second question is, you know, the biggest celebration of the Muslim community is either tomorrow or day after tomorrow, Eid. Last year because of the lockdown and COVID, they don't celebrate in the open field, but this year they are preparing to celebrate Eid. So, do you have any because of COVID and the guidelines, CDC guideline, City guideline, do you have any message for them?

Mayor: Yes. I first want to say Ramadan Mubarak to colleagues and friends and New Yorkers in the Muslim community. And let's all be safe. I mean, there's certainly gatherings happening the right way, outdoors and distanced and people are being really, really careful and that's great. But we also see that we can gather in ways we couldn't a year ago and that's great. So, we celebrate the community. We celebrate this very special time of year. We want people to have the opportunity to honor their faith, but let's still be smart. We're still fighting COVID. Let's do it the right way.

And everybody, as we conclude today, I think that's sort of the summary of everything that we are doing. New Yorkers are really being smart, really being smart. As I mentioned, 3.8 million people have gotten at least one dose of the vaccine already and tens of thousands of folks every day coming in and getting their first dose. This is the way forward. Get vaccinated, be smart about making sure that what we do is safe because that's what brings us back. And we all want this recovery. We can feel it. We can see it, help us get there. If you haven't been vaccinated yet, this is the best time to do it. It's easy. And we're adding these great new incentives. Come on down, get vaccinated. Thank you, everybody.

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