

**NYC Department of Transportation Testimony Before the
City Council Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
May 30, 2024**

Good morning, Chair Brooks-Powers and members of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. I am Margaret Forgione, First Deputy Commissioner at the New York City Department of Transportation. With me today are Deputy Commissioner of Bridges and Chief Bridge Officer Paul Schwartz and Assistant Commissioner for Intergovernmental and Community Affairs Rick Rodriguez. We are also joined by the Department of Environmental Protection's Deputy Chief Operating Officer Kimberly Cipriano, the Department of Design and Construction's Deputy Commissioner of Infrastructure Thomas Wynne, and the Department of Parks and Recreation's Chief of Policy and Long-Range Planning Sarah Neilson and Assistant Commissioner for Architecture and Engineering Program Management Terence McCormick. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of Mayor Adams and Commissioner Rodriguez on how the City is future-proofing our infrastructure.

Bridges

I want to begin by giving an overview of NYC DOT's bridges. NYC DOT owns, operates, and maintains 809 bridges throughout New York City. The Brooklyn, Manhattan, Williamsburg, and Ed Koch Queensboro bridges are some of our most notable bridges, but our inventory is as diverse as the city itself. DOT operates 23 moveable bridges such as the Pulaski Bridge over Newton Creek, and the swing-span Willis Avenue Bridge over the Harlem River that connects Manhattan and the Bronx. Additionally, DOT provides capital rehabilitation for 53 culverts, or tunnels that direct water away from roads, and inspects and repairs over 600 retaining walls.

NYC DOT's vast web of bridges is in the hands of the experienced engineers in DOT's Division of Bridges. Specializing in structural, mechanical, electrical, environmental, geotechnical, and civil engineering, our team oversees the design, construction, and maintenance of DOT's inventory.

Safety is our top priority at NYC DOT, and all our bridges are safe. DOT's bridges are inspected at least once every two years, in line with federal mandates, but more often if determined necessary. The New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) hires licensed engineering consultants to perform these biennial inspections for all bridges except pedestrian bridges and bridges less than 20 feet in length. The remaining bridges are inspected by NYC DOT's inspection team of licensed, professional engineering consultants. These inspections allow us to determine specific rehabilitation or corrective repair needs. 99 percent of our bridges are in Fair, Good, or Very Good condition. The seven bridges that are rated Poor are in the current FY24-33 Capital plan and continue to be safe for their allowed uses.

NYC DOT has a robust capital bridge project portfolio. At \$12.4 billion, nearly half of the agency's FY24-33 Capital Plan is devoted to bridge reconstruction and rehabilitation. We hire consultants to design, construct, and provide on-site oversight for the majority of our bridge capital projects. At any given time, we have between 25-40 capital bridge project contracts

underway. The scope of these projects is unique to each individual bridge and range from full reconstruction to targeted repairs of specific bridge components. The purpose, however, is the same: to extend the useful life of the bridge and protect the safety of New York City travelers.

In addition to capital projects, NYC DOT has in-house tradespeople who can be deployed on demand as well as our “When and Where” contractors capable of responding quickly to urgent conditions. We also have preventive maintenance contracts for the maintenance and preservation of the East River and Movable Bridges.

Three Major Components of a Bridge

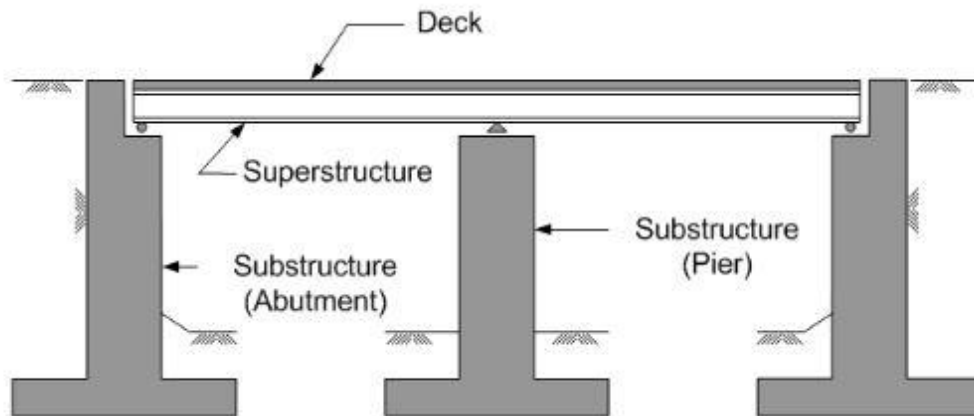


Image source: Minnesota State Department of Transportation

Turning to bridge ratings and how NYC DOT determines the overall condition of our bridges. DOT has a clear understanding of the condition of our entire inventory of bridges, but coming up with a translatable rating is a complicated process. Prior to 2016, in conformance with NYSDOT standards, NYC DOT generated an overall condition rating for vehicular bridges under a 1-7 scale, with 1 indicating structural failure and 7 indicating new condition. This changed in 2016 when the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) came out with an Element Rating System which breaks down each bridge component into four condition states ranging from good to severe and replaces qualitative ratings with quantitative assessments. This new federal rating system, however, does not prescribe an overall bridge condition rating.

Because the New York City Charter mandates an overall bridge condition rating, NYC DOT worked with NYSDOT to develop an overall bridge condition rating that is consistent for all bridge types. Together, we developed a new calculated condition rating scale that is based on the three National Bridge Infrastructure (NBI) ratings - NBI Deck, NBI Superstructure, and NBI Substructure. These ratings are then given relative weights based on their overall importance and are now referred to as NBI Weighted and are on a scale of 0-9. We then translate these ratings into our verbal condition ratings of Poor (0-4), Fair (4.01-6.40), Good (6.41-7.70), and

Very Good (7.71-9). We will use these new ratings in the next Annual Bridge and Tunnel Report that we will release in the coming months.

Tunnels

On tunnels, NYC DOT maintains four vehicular tunnels and one pedestrian tunnel. These include the Park Avenue Tunnel, the First Avenue Tunnel, the Battery Park Underpass, the West Street Underpass, and the 191st Street Pedestrian Tunnel. Like our bridges, our tunnels are inspected on a two-year cycle according to federal mandates by our in-house inspectors and consultants. We are also looking at ways to make our tunnels more resilient to the changing climate and increased flooding. This year, we are looking to award a contract to install flood protection at the Battery Park Underpass and West Street Underpass consisting of flood proof gates and doors to protect the tunnel and its ventilation structures.

Resurfacing

Aside from bridges and tunnels, NYC DOT is responsible for operating and maintaining 6,300 miles of roadways and highways, and also has jurisdiction over 12,000 miles of sidewalk. All New Yorkers use roadways and sidewalks to get around—whether by foot, bike, wheelchair, bus, car, or other modes. And all of our goods travel to their final destinations on our streets. Maintaining streets in a state of good repair is a central part of DOT’s mission and is essential to the quality of life and economic success of this city.

DOT resurfaces roadways to address problems on the surface, including cracking, patching, and peeling, by replacing the top layer of asphalt pavement. This extends the roadway’s lifespan and helps prevent potholes—the more we pave, the fewer potholes we need to fill. DOT’s budget has baseline funding for resurfacing 1,100 lane miles and up to 50 miles of protected bike lanes each year.

In addition to our resurfacing work, DOT crews also fix potholes. We are committed to timely response to pothole complaints and respond in about two days, unless there are underlying conditions that require a larger project.

Capital Delivery Reform legislation

New York City needs the tools to build better, faster, and more efficiently for all its capital projects. For this reason, the City is working with the Senate and Assembly on an Alternative Delivery bill that would allow the City to use Progressive Design-Build to speed up procurement on capital projects through a one-step process that allows early work to start sooner than under the traditional design-bid-build model. This would help the City deliver projects faster and keep assets in a state of good repair. Progressive Design Build is being used around the country as well as here in New York City by the Battery Park City Authority to deliver 8,000 linear feet of coastal flood protection. New York City should be able to use this important tool to deliver projects that will benefit New Yorkers throughout the city.

Legislation

Now turning to the legislation before the Council today.

Introduction 272

First, Intro. 272 sponsored by Council Member Joseph. This bill would require the City to develop a capital plan and implementation timeline for installing public restrooms at locations identified in the report required by Local Law 114 of 2022.

The City supports expanded access to public restrooms for all New Yorkers. The City and its partners currently operate 1,066 public restrooms citywide, covering 98 percent of the city. Additionally, the report NYC Parks and DOT published pursuant to Local Law 114 of 2022 identified 151 additional restroom sites across the five boroughs, many in city parks. These sites include 55 planned projects to construct new public restrooms, all of which are in progress and expected to be completed within the next few years, as well as 96 additional potentially feasible sites. As the report also notes, DOT plans to move forward with the stakeholder approval process for 10 new Automatic Public Toilets (APT) sites, which are installed and maintained by the City's coordinated street furniture franchisee, JCDecaux, and are not capially funded.

This Administration does not support this bill as written. Capital planning is a collaborative process between agencies, City Hall, and the Council. The planning must take into consideration the overall capital needs of the City and standard project scheduling challenges. The Administration would like to work on this bill to ensure flexibility is maintained as the City undertakes largescale infrastructure priorities.

Introduction 574

Finally, on Intro 574 sponsored by Council Member Brewer, which would require DOT to create a website that provides expanded information about open spaces on an open space coordination platform. DOT is proud of the public spaces we provide to New Yorkers, including our pedestrian plazas and Open Streets, where we support programming and events to create vibrant public spaces. Putting on these events often requires input from multiple agencies, which the Mayor's Office of Citywide Event Coordination and Management (CECM) helps to coordinate and oversee. Events can also happen in spaces owned by other agencies that DOT does not have jurisdiction over, such as parkland.

CECM posts a number of resources, guides, event details, and other information on its website about using the City's different public spaces for events and programming. For our part, DOT posts details about the days and times when our public spaces are open to the public on our website. Sister agencies that manage public spaces also do the same. The Administration would be happy to continue conversations with the Council about how to best coordinate the use of the City's many public spaces.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Council for the opportunity to testify before you today. We are proud of the work that we do to keep the City's infrastructure in a state of good repair—work that will benefit New Yorkers for generations to come. We would now be happy to answer any questions.