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2 found a way to suggest it. Anyway, I don't want
3 to take up any more time. I will try to listen to
4 what you're saying and I ask that you also listen-

5 [Crosstalk]

6 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I'm going to
7 move on. I'd like to thank our first panel for
8 attending. I'd now like to call up Borough
9 President Markowitz.

10 [Pause]

11 MARTY MARKOWITZ: Whenever you're
12 ready, Mr. Chairman.

13 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Borough
14 President Markowitz, please proceed.

15 MARTY MARKOWITZ: Thank you very,
16 very much. Let me begin by thanking the New York
17 City Council Committee on Transportation and
18 certainly you, Chairman James Vacca, and members
19 for allowing me to speak today. I want to make it
20 clear that anything I say in my remarks nowhere
21 negates my opinion that Janette Sadik-Khan is a
22 consummate professional who cares greatly about
23 the future of transportation in this city. In
24 addition, Transportation Alternatives is an
25 outstanding organization and I thank them for

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2 their leadership in bringing issues of
3 transportation to the forefront. My office, in
4 fact, has had a long working relationship toward
5 Brooklyn to name a couple of great events that
6 we've worked cooperatively with.

7 I'm also in favor of installing
8 bike lanes, particularly in neighborhoods closest
9 to Manhattan. I've been a vocal supporter of the
10 bike lane on 9th Street leading right into
11 Prospect Park and Park Slope and on the Brooklyn
12 waterfront greenway that will open up the entire
13 waterfront from Greenpoint to Sunset Park.

14 I also feel very strongly about the
15 importance of road safety. In fact, my office has
16 compiled a safety brochure that promotes civility,
17 common sense and respect for all road users and
18 copies are available here for anyone who might
19 like to review it.

20 But although cycling is a wonderful
21 way for people to transverse the city, it's simply
22 not a viable option for the majority of commuters.
23 Particularly in Brooklyn, many residents depend on
24 cars because their neighborhoods are not well
25 served by public transportation or not at all. In

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2 this age of severe MTA cuts, I fear this group
3 will grow considerably.

4 As you're well aware, I've been
5 very vocal in my opposition to the drastic changes
6 made to Prospect Park West to accommodate a two-
7 way bike lane. Had DOT installed a traditional
8 bike lane, I would have supported it
9 enthusiastically. I know that overwhelmingly the
10 local residents would have as well. However, the
11 reconfiguration, in my opinion, has been a
12 disaster.

13 It increases congestion on the
14 roadway, particularly during the height of the
15 rush hour and during the summer months, the warmer
16 months, and ruins the aesthetics, in my opinion,
17 of one of the most beautiful grandest boulevards
18 New York City has, Prospect Park West. It takes
19 away parking spaces in Park Slope, one of the most
20 parking-starved neighborhoods in New York City.

21 It's increased the propensity of
22 cyclists to fail to yield to pedestrians,
23 especially to seniors, parents with small children
24 and folks with disabilities who can't see the
25 oncoming cyclists on the other side of the parked

1 cars which now are in the middle of the street.
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3 It's grossly unfair, not to mention unrealistic to
4 ask pedestrians every moment of their lives to be
5 hyperactive, hyperaware of every hazard just to
6 get across the street to the park.

7 The point of today's meeting is to
8 discuss opportunities and challenges to oversight.
9 I have some suggestions. There's a lack of
10 clarity in how DOT makes those decisions.

11 Recently, a bike lane, as you already know, on
12 Father Capodanno Boulevard in Staten Island was
13 removed at the request of area residents, City
14 Council Member James Oddo and my colleague Staten
15 Island Borough President James Molinaro. Yet, my
16 similar request regarding Prospect Park West fell
17 on deaf ears.

18 I believe that the borough
19 president's office is worthy of some deference in
20 this matter since I'm the only elected official
21 that represents the entire Borough of Brooklyn. I
22 have a perspective on the impacts, not only in the
23 immediate area and the neighborhoods surrounding
24 the park, but all of Brooklyn.

25 On Central Park West in Manhattan,

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2 the DOT somehow found a way to install a
3 traditional bike lane without drastically altering
4 the streets and without shifting parking to the
5 middle of the street. Of course, there is no bike
6 lane at all on Fifth Avenue along Central Park, or
7 on the area streets that lead directly into
8 Central Park. For instance, East 59th Street,
9 East 72nd Street and East 79th Street, just as
10 wide as Prospect Park West, between Madison and
11 Fifth Avenues, all of them go right into Central
12 Park, no bicycle lane.

13 It's crazy to believe that with all
14 the museums and tourists that Fifth Avenue doesn't
15 have the same problems with speeding as Prospect
16 Park West, allegedly. So why treat Brooklyn
17 different than the Upper East Side or the Upper
18 West Side of Manhattan.

19 DOT states that Prospect Park West
20 bike lane was put in to curtail speeding. You
21 would think we could have installed a couple extra
22 stop signs or traffic lights, but no. In my
23 opinion, the DOT took this request to improve
24 safety and slow down traffic and used it to turn
25 Prospect Park West into an experiment to fit their

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2 current ideology. To me, allocating road use
3 should be about balance. Hard for some people to
4 accept the word balance. But what the DOT has put
5 on Prospect Park West is not balance, especially
6 considering that cyclists already have the use of
7 the roads in the park, which are closed to traffic
8 22 hours a day on each side during the week and 24
9 hours a day on weekends.

10 Now we could all agree that over
11 the last few years the streets of New York have
12 been radically transformed. This transformation
13 is happening at the behest of a few policy makers
14 at DOT acting unilaterally based on their
15 philosophical beliefs. Mayor Bloomberg's PlaNYC
16 calls for the installation of 1,800 bike lanes in
17 the five boroughs by 2030. DOT has also
18 instituted programs that have curbed driving,
19 reduced parking spaces, such as pedestrian refuge
20 islands, down the street sidewalk expansions and
21 projects that turn streets into pedestrian plazas.

22 This kind of significant change to
23 an existing condition in the city should not be
24 the sole purview of the executive branch of city
25 government and the DOT. If it were a traditional

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2 land use, such change would have to go through
3 extensive review. But street space gets a pass
4 because it falls into some sort of oversight
5 loophole.

6 Like our land use review policies,
7 large scale changes to streets should involve
8 approval by the borough presidents and the City
9 Council, especially given the Transportation
10 Commissioner Sadik-Khan's own beliefs, as she told
11 the *New York Observer* in 2008, that in some way
12 she thinks of herself as the largest real estate
13 developer in New York.

14 Therefore, while I commend this
15 committee's current oversight efforts, I believe
16 that the Council should institute a new and potent
17 mechanism of independent oversight and approval
18 for all significant DOT interventions and street
19 changes. Any studies done on the impact of bike
20 lanes, plaza or other road changes must be made by
21 an impartial agency that is independent of the DOT
22 and not based on unscientific public opinion
23 polls.

24 Communities impacted by these
25 proposed road changes should be informed in

1
2 writing and public hearings should be required so
3 that community boards can make informed decisions
4 based on the residents and businesses they
5 represent. And of course, borough presidents must
6 be part of this oversight.

7 The Council must confront some
8 basic questions. How do we see the future of New
9 York City streets? Do we want the city's limited
10 road space given over to plazas, islands and bike
11 lanes, some of which are barely used, while there
12 are other uses that make more sense and move more
13 people. Shouldn't any reallocation of this
14 valuable road space be made to move the most
15 people and for projects like light rail or
16 trolleys?

17 There are other questions that need
18 answering. In this time of budget cuts, where is
19 this money coming from for these projects? Not
20 just construction materials and personnel and
21 contractors staffed to design bike lanes and
22 plazas. What about the potential for these road
23 changes to impede emergency vehicles? Do we
24 really know whether DOT changes are negatively
25 impacting police and FDNY? Is there even a

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mechanism for the FDNY, not to mention NYPD, the Sanitation Department and private ambulance services to weigh in on plans before they are approved?

The DOT claims their policies foster public safety, but with all due respect, in my opinion this is not only about safety, it's about ideology. It's about an ideology whose ultimate goal is to force people out of their cars.

We must not treat driving and cars as the enemy. Every day cars become cleaner and more efficient. If we stigmatize car owners, in my opinion we risk alienating a large part of the city's middle class. In fact, a surprising thing I found, Mr. Chairman, is that more than half the emails that I received about this issue are folks that are opposed to my position, admitted to me that they own a car as well. For many New Yorkers, owning a car is a quality of life issue, one that offers security, privacy and convenience for many of them, included many bikers.

We need to decide what the fundamental mission of DOT is. Is it to

1
2 facilitate efficient movement of people and good
3 throughout the city or to create a traffic
4 nightmare to discourage car use and implement
5 nothing less than a backdoor approach to the
6 failed congestion pricing plan.

7 Since the current leadership of DOT
8 assumed the job in '07, I believe they have paid
9 scant attention to the goal of moving goods and
10 services in and out of New York City as
11 efficiently as they could. Our city economy
12 depends on this, but instead the DOT has
13 apparently decided that its priority is using the
14 government to force people out of their cars.

15 We need a rational, balanced
16 transportation policy, one that recognizes
17 appropriate areas for bicycle users, which I
18 enthusiastically support. This policy cannot be
19 developed or overseen by the DOT alone, especially
20 under its current leadership. So we must empower
21 the City Council and the borough presidents'
22 offices to play a larger role in these decisions
23 so that all New Yorkers, whether they bike, drive,
24 walk, or take public transportation, can keep this
25 city moving.

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2 In the next few days, many
3 Brooklynites will receive my annual holiday card.
4 Let me share with you some of my favorite things.
5 This, in my opinion, will put some of this in
6 perspective. If I may, Mr. Chairman, to the song
7 of "My Favorite Things".

8 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Not to sing
9 though.

10 MARTY MARKOWITZ: [singing] Lanes
11 fit for Fido and lanes made for--

12 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: [interposing] I
13 don't know if I can allow singing at a hearing.

14 MARTY MARKOWITZ: I'll read it.

15 [Laughter]

16 MARTY MARKOWITZ: I'll do it
17 briefly.

18 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: After you sing,
19 we may all be singing the blues. I heard you once
20 before--

21 MARTY MARKOWITZ: [singing] Lanes
22 fit for Fido and lanes made for lovers, hikers and
23 bikers, significant others. A lane just for
24 Santa, but please don't complain. These are a few
25 of my favorite lanes. Strollers and schlepers and

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2 skaters and joggers, holiday lanes just for all
3 the egg noggers, let's not forget cars, it's
4 getting insane. Welcome to Brooklyn, the Borough
5 of Lanes. When the horn honks, when the dog
6 bites, when the bikers stray, I simply remember by
7 favorite lanes and then I just say, "oy vey".
8 Thank you, members of the committee. Thank you
9 very, very much.

10 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Mr. Borough
11 President, I wish you a wonderful continued in
12 government.

13 MARTY MARKOWITZ: I'll try to keep
14 my day job.

15 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Keep your day
16 job, yes. Thank you, Mr. Borough President.

17 MARTY MARKOWITZ: Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Keep your day
19 job. You have a quick question for the borough
20 president, Mr. Lander?

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: I always
22 look forward to the holiday card. I hope it's
23 coming with a recording this year. I actually
24 want to just call out attention to the fact that I
25 think your bike safety pamphlet is better than the

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2 Council's bike safety pamphlet. I appreciate your
3 distributing it.

4 I do want to make the same request
5 that I made of the prior panel. I think it's
6 obvious that you have a different point of view on
7 what should happen with the lanes altogether, but
8 we have a set of recommendations, while
9 maintaining the configuration, that we believe go
10 to addressing many of the concerns people have. I
11 hope that we can work together to take a look at
12 them and get your feedback on them as we move
13 forward.

14 MARTY MARKOWITZ: Brad, my personal
15 objective is to remove these two-way bike lanes
16 and to install a traditional bike lane on Prospect
17 Park West. I'd love to see that. Any future
18 ideas for two-way bike lanes should incorporate
19 some of your ideas. Absolutely, I would totally
20 support that enthusiastically.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you.

22 [Off mic]

23 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Mr. Borough
24 President, I thank you very much.

25 MARTY MARKOWITZ: Thank you, Mr.

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Chairman.

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: And I wish you
the best for the holidays.

MARTY MARKOWITZ: All of us.
Merry, Merry, Happy--

[Pause]

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Good health
first. Okay. Now our next panel will be--

[Long pause]

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Our next panel
will be Noah Budnick, Transportation Alternatives,
Christine Berthet--oh, Christine, how are you?
Come on up. Eric McClure. Why don't we start
with Noah Budnick. [Pause] No, tell him no.

FEMALE VOICE: [Off mic] Sure.

MALE VOICE: Yeah, because you're
second.

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Oh, and let me
acknowledge the presence of Council Member Van
Bramer, I'm sorry.

[Long pause]

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: All right, just
for the record, I'm going to give Mr. Noah, Noah--

NOAH BUDNICK: It's all right.