

NICE BUS MEETING

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Zoom conference

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1 (Time noted: 5:31 p.m.)

2 MR. SHRENKEL: Good evening. Welcome to
3 the Nassau County Bus Transit Committee
4 Meeting.

5 I'm Sheldon Shrenkel. I'm the chairman of
6 the committee.

7 We think we have a fairly brief agenda
8 today, but we do have some public comments for
9 the record.

10 First, I'd like to introduce the members
11 of our committee and they can raise their hand
12 or give us a shout out.

13 We have Mr. Tony Rosario. He just must've
14 stepped away, but he was here.

15 MR. ROSARIO: I'm here.

16 MR. SHRENKEL: Mr. John Duroseau.

17 MR. DUROSEAU: I'm here.

18 MR. SHRENKEL: Thank you.

19 Ms. Dawn Falco?

20 MS. FALCO: Hi, good evening, everybody.

21 MR. SHRENKEL: Mr. Joel Berse. We know we
22 had Joel on the screen before.

23 MS. FALCO: Joel, you're on mute. You
24 have to unmute yourself.

25 MR. SHRENKEL: I don't see him on the

1 screen.

2 MR. BERSE: Here I am.

3 MR. SHRENKEL: Thank you, Mr. Berse.

4 And we have counsel to the board,

5 Mr. Peter DiSilvio, who we have on audio.

6 MR. DISILVIO: Good evening, everybody.

7 MR. SHRENKEL: Thank you, Peter.

8 With that, getting into the meeting, we'd
9 like to hear from a presentation by the CEO of
10 NICE, Mr. Jack Khzouz, who is going to give us
11 some ridership updates and service updates.

12 Mr. Khzouz. Thank you.

13 MR. KHZOUZ: It is good to see everybody.
14 I appreciate your service and everybody joining
15 us here. It's been a long year and -- but
16 we're hopeful looking forward to a better year
17 in 2022.

18 So, today, we're going to talk about the
19 budget outlook and how that progresses, current
20 ridership updates, and then some service
21 updates with some capital expenditures that
22 will increase our ability to provide better
23 service.

24 I want to start with our Q3 because that's
25 our latest. The Q3 report card that we

1 normally present to the committee every
2 quarter, as you can see, it's the same KPI as
3 we normally look at, things like on-time
4 performance, pull-outs, accidents, safety,
5 Paratransit and call-answer ratio, and
6 productivity.

7 Let's go through that very quickly.

8 On-time performance, the goal for our fixed the
9 route on-time performance is 70. We're going
10 raise that next year, but regardless, for the
11 third quarter, we're at 87 percent on-time
12 performance and currently we're actually
13 running 91 percent on-time performance. So, on
14 our on-time performance has continued to be
15 strong through the pandemic.

16 We're getting to where we need to go and
17 get our passengers where they need to go
18 relatively on time with few interruptions.

19 Missed pull-outs continue to be less than
20 1 percent. That doesn't mean we miss a trip,
21 that just means the first bus that leaves the
22 depot may not get out on time, but it does get
23 out in most cases.

24 Accidents per 100,000 miles, we had a
25 little bit of an uptick in Q3. We normally do.

1 That's normally due to increased traffic in the
2 fall, but it's still within goal range, just
3 barely, but still within goal range. Again,
4 that number has come down quite a bit for Q4 so
5 far or the beginning of Q4, so I'm pretty happy
6 with the performance there.

7 For our Paratransit area, we had some
8 issues with staffing on our calls, our
9 reservations. Just like every other transit
10 company, actually just like every other
11 employer, we had issues with staffing. So, our
12 call-answer ratios dropped to an unacceptable
13 level. We are back up and staffed, so that's
14 75 percent is a thing of the past. We're back
15 in the mid 90s to high 90s right now. That was
16 a relatively short period of time, not proud of
17 that performance, so we're coming back from
18 that.

19 On-time performance also is 82, again a
20 little lower than we'd like it to be, though
21 above goal. We want that number to really be
22 at 85 and above. Again, we're getting back
23 there, but the surges in ride requests have --
24 again, we haven't been able to keep up with our
25 hiring there, so it does affect on-time

1 performance a little bit. I will say Q4,
2 again, has started off much stronger. I'm
3 feeling much better about it.

4 Missed pull-outs again, below 1 percent,
5 still not as good as I'd like it to be, but we
6 do have some new vehicles that we just
7 delivered. We're going to talk about that.
8 It's already helped our missed pull-outs.
9 Again, we didn't miss a trip, we just failed to
10 pull out on time.

11 Accidents, great performance in accidents
12 this last quarter; very, very happy with that.

13 And productivity continues to go up. 1.45
14 is about the top end of our productivity range.
15 You go much higher than that, then you start
16 perfecting service. Trips tend to be longer;
17 our clients tend not to be happier because we
18 have to make more stops for pick ups and drop
19 offs. So, 1.45 is about the top end of where
20 we want to go. As we get more drivers, that
21 number will come down. Overall, our
22 performance was good. I'm not ever happy with
23 a good performance. I want a great
24 performance. I suspect that Q4 will show our
25 on-time performance on fixed route in the 90s,

1 missed pull-outs closer to zero, accident
2 improvements, and overall a much better
3 performance around the corner.

4 You've got to excuse me. I've got a
5 little cold in my throat. I apologize for the
6 gravelly voice.

7 MS. FALCO: Jack, I'm sorry to interrupt.
8 But would it be possible to increase the size
9 of the slides? They look very small on the
10 screen.

11 MR. KHZOUZ: Erika, can you do that?

12 MR. BERSE: Can I make a suggestion that
13 you e-mail a copy of each of this to us.

14 MR. KHZOUZ: Yes. Let's go to the second
15 slide. I want to give everyone a budget
16 outline. We've done this a few times before.
17 I feel like we're all old friends on how we do
18 this.

19 I want to give everybody kind of the
20 outline of where the timeline on how the budget
21 works, the operating budget.

22 In September, we gave the county a
23 projected budget of what 2022 will look like
24 assuming the general service hours that we
25 currently offer with a few exceptions, a few

1 tweaks. The county at that point accepted the
2 budget.

3 In November, it was generally approved by
4 the legislators. NYPA will now approve the
5 county overall budget so that'll have some
6 play. In the past, NYPA hasn't really played
7 much in our budget, hasn't played much in
8 effecting our budget, but, you know, who knows.

9 In April, we will get our actual operating
10 assistance finalized from New York State.
11 Operating assistance, or STOA, is the biggest
12 single budget contributor to our operating
13 budget for next year. Unfortunately, we don't
14 get to that until the end of March for April 1
15 start. I'm fairly confident though that we
16 will produce a budget for next year that shows
17 slight increases in service hours, obviously no
18 service cuts, and no fare increases. I'm
19 fairly confident in that. That's the timeline
20 right now. I'm currently working and reaching
21 out to all our state representatives so they
22 understand our needs, and they have been very,
23 very positive, and very supportive. So, we'll
24 keep our fingers crossed there. And I'm very
25 confident though that for the next few years we

1 should see a fairly stable level of service
2 with a few slight increases and, knock wood, no
3 fare increases.

4 I wanted give everybody a ridership update
5 on where we are. This was as of the beginning
6 of October. I have not seen yet the audited
7 numbers for November, but we are at about
8 72 percent of return to pre-COVID levels. That
9 in comparison to New York City, comparison to
10 Long Island Railroad, comparison to how we
11 compare to Westchester -- Westchester is a
12 little bit higher than us in return, they're in
13 about 75 percent, but it's been very fluid from
14 week to week. Obviously, with weather and as
15 we get into the winter, we'll see what happens
16 there. But the main drivers currently of our
17 return to full 100 percent pre-COVID service is
18 really the colleges and Long Island Railroad.
19 Nassau Community College in itself in 2019, we
20 transported 7,000 students a day to Nassau
21 Community College. Their enrollment is down
22 quite a bit and they still have a learn-at-home
23 program, so we're not seeing that comeback
24 there. Also, two Long Island Railroad
25 connections again throughout the county have

1 not returned to the levels that we'd like them
2 to be at, so transporting people there is a
3 little bit different.

4 We have seen some changes in the way
5 people travel though. Our Saturday and Sunday
6 service is almost at 90 percent return to
7 normal. So, weekend service is coming back
8 quite strong. And community-based service,
9 service within the county, has come back higher
10 than the overall average. So, we are adjusting
11 schedules to make sure that we're accommodating
12 those changes in the way our travel patterns
13 have developed.

14 We haven't stopped on our community
15 involvement. We continue to be involved in the
16 community every day. We just finished our
17 November food drive for Island Harvest. For
18 this year, 2021, we donated -- when I say we, I
19 say the employees here -- donated almost ten
20 pallets of food and \$6,000 to Island Harvest to
21 help them with their fall needs. We're very,
22 very happy to do that. They're our major
23 benefactor for the year. We get behind this
24 quite a bit. And they had that many pallets of
25 food, they actually had to send a second large

1 truck to pick it up here at the NICE facility.

2 So, we're very, very happy to do that.

3 Erika also did a great job in reaching out
4 to a couple schools. The Cromwell Avenue
5 School in West Hempstead, they needed help with
6 pumpkins. For some reason, the normal person
7 who donates the pumpkins fell through, we
8 reached out to them, and we were able to
9 respond through a generous donation by actually
10 a couple of employees here who went out and
11 bought pumpkins for the school. So, that was
12 great to see. We just want to make sure that
13 we're part of the community beyond just
14 offering transportation solutions.

15 Yesterday, Erika and her team put together
16 the holiday bus. We've done this now for a few
17 years. Bob Itchkal, who is a longtime driver
18 with us, plays the part of Santa, which is a
19 lot of fun. Bob does a great job. I think
20 Bob's been with us for 30 years, and the MTA
21 before, and Long Island Railroad before that,
22 or Long Island bus before that. Erika took the
23 bus. We decorated the bus, first of all.
24 Erika took the bus to a couple of schools. We
25 went to Hempstead Transit Center also and

1 Roosevelt Field Mall. It's just kind of a neat
2 tradition. Again, in that same discussion, we
3 also talk to the kids about safety around
4 traffic, especially around buses, so it really
5 serves a couple of different purposes. It
6 makes us feel good. It certainly again,
7 engrains us into the fabric of the community.

8 Some additional service updates and
9 capital project updates I want to make sure
10 everybody is aware of. We just finished
11 delivering 15 new Paratransit vehicles. We are
12 now complete with the Paratransit fleet. These
13 are Ford 350s. You see it on the top left.
14 Again, through our procurement department that
15 we run on behalf of the county, we were able to
16 get those vehicles and get them into service
17 right away.

18 In addition to that, really happy to have
19 100 new fixed-route vehicles that just joined
20 the fleet. They're still trickling in and
21 before the first quarter of next year, we'll be
22 complete there. We've got 20 new New Flyer
23 vehicles in service and about 25 of the 80
24 Gillig vehicles that are now in service. That
25 has helped tremendously with things like missed

1 pull-outs, and mid route breakdowns. I'm very,
2 very happy to have those in service. They look
3 great, they drive well, and they're very, very
4 dependable. Again, out of a fleet of 300 or
5 so, you have a third of the fleet that's brand
6 new. That makes a big, big difference to our
7 customers and our drivers. So, we're very
8 appreciative.

9 MR. BERSE: Jack?

10 MR. KHZOUZ: Yes, sir.

11 MR. BERSE: Anything with more articulated
12 buses?

13 MR. KHZOUZ: So far not yet, Mr. Berse.
14 The next opportunity we'll have to look at that
15 will be the end of next year. We really like
16 the artics that we have in service now. We
17 want to expand the fleet of artics and put
18 those on the N4, and we'll look at doing that
19 in the next rotation of purchases.

20 But great question. Thank you.

21 I'm also really, really happy to announce
22 that we did award six new battery electric
23 buses to New Flyer and they'll deliver at the
24 end of 2022. They are state-of-the-art
25 vehicles. We were tasked -- when I say we, I'm

1 talking about the team at NICE -- with the
2 vehicle doing all the vehicle specs, running
3 the procurement, awarding the procurement, and
4 now we're on phase two which is starting to
5 meet with all the infrastructure charging
6 stations and developing a piece of property on
7 the corner of Commercial and Oak Avenue. It is
8 a decommissioned water purification plant. It
9 was decommissioned in the '80s. The county has
10 granted that piece of property to us to
11 mitigate the current building that's there and
12 develop it as our standalone charging station.
13 We're very happy to have that.

14 We hope to deliver the vehicles and the
15 charging stations phase one and two at the end
16 of 2022. We think we can do it, but it's all
17 about supply chain right now. Obviously, we
18 can't run the vehicles without the charging
19 stations. We're going to back into a little
20 bit. It's been a very challenging process, but
21 it's coming along quite well. We're very, very
22 happy with it, and we're excited to have this
23 new technology to introduce. We're already on
24 a completely low emissions service with C and
25 G. And now, with adding these vehicles, it'll

1 be interesting to get into a no emissions
2 service. We'll design service once we fully
3 understand the charging stations, and the
4 range, and everything else. That'll be a
5 learning process, but we're really excited to
6 have this new technology for our riders and our
7 drivers.

8 MR. BERSE: Do they drive with the same
9 units that the electric cars do or is it
10 special?

11 MR. KHZOUZ: No, it's a special unit,
12 Joel. It's a really large size unit, the size
13 of a refrigerator. And we have to work
14 directly with the power supplier here to ensure
15 that the grid, our grid, our corner lot, has
16 enough power to be able to charge these
17 vehicles. So, they'll charge overnight, mostly
18 overnight, and one power station or one
19 charging station will power two vehicles. So,
20 we're working with how these are going to be
21 deployed, are they going to charge in the front
22 or are they going to charge in the back and all
23 the other things around that, so still a lot of
24 lessons to be learned, but we're working with
25 both New Flyer and ABB, which is one of the

1 charging suppliers, and a few others, to learn
2 more about these. We already started training
3 in our maintenance department on how to
4 properly service these vehicles.

5 MR. BERSE: What do they project the range
6 to be before you actually have to actually
7 learn for real?

8 MR. KHZOUZ: So, the projected range on
9 paper is 240 miles with a full load. It drops
10 quite a bit when we turn on the heat or the
11 air-conditioning. We're on Long Island. We
12 always have either heat or air on, right, so
13 we're going to plan out more of 180 miles on
14 them initially to make sure that we have
15 obviously enough range, but they'll still be
16 plenty of range at 180 miles is a full day of
17 service.

18 MR. BERSE: I hope you get a portable
19 charging service vehicle for emergencies not to
20 always have to tow them back.

21 MR. KHZOUZ: Right. And as part of that,
22 there's a charger on wheels that will be
23 stationed in our maintenance department that
24 can be transported, loaded on a truck, and
25 transported, or it can roll around in the

1 maintenance department and make sure when a
2 vehicle is in service, it can be charged while
3 it sits. Those are all great points.

4 Obviously, part of our customer experience
5 is the Rosa Parks Hempstead Transit Center. We
6 are now going into the final phase of upgrading
7 that depot or that transit center. It's really
8 taken on a new life completely over the past 36
9 months; new paint, rust mitigation, new roof,
10 we did some exterior work, added digital
11 screens. This last phase will be new terrazzo
12 floors, new modern ceramic wall tiles, ADA
13 doors all across the building, and new concrete
14 outside.

15 This is a multi-year multimillion dollar
16 project to upgrade the center. Once it's done,
17 we will really have a great, modern center that
18 looks great, that feels great, and we'll be
19 able to service our daily passengers in a much
20 better way.

21 MR. BERSE: My thought about this is this
22 is great what you're doing there, but every
23 time updates are going, they go to the Rosa
24 Parks Center, they go to the Roosevelt Field
25 area. There's still nothing having been done

1 around Hicksville train station and with the
2 revitalization project that is dancing right
3 now, there should be something where you
4 discuss with the town about getting some kind
5 of a movement to be able to get those buses on
6 New Bridge Road in a lot better safe position
7 especially when there's snowfall. And with the
8 new development, I still don't see any room,
9 and I've complained about that, but I do see a
10 partial solution. The management at Broadway
11 Commons has shifted and they have a huge
12 parcel in the front where that old restaurant
13 that's now been closed, I would think since
14 pre-pandemic. And that would be something that
15 maybe you could do a la what you have at
16 Roosevelt Field, not saying a whole transit
17 center but getting the buses off the road and
18 making it a safer thing, but somebody's got to
19 start talking, and basically it's got to come
20 from you first.

21 MR. KHZOUZ: Yeah, and we have met over
22 2 years ago about what our needs were supposed
23 to be. Again, I can't speak for what the
24 priorities were there, right --

25 MR. BERSE: Before you go there, the mall

1 management things changed after the summer.

2 MR. KHZOUZ: Yes.

3 MR. BERSE: So, you're talking about new
4 players, new thoughts, and they're hungry
5 because they're not renting everything like
6 they were and they have Macy's vacant, so they
7 really need to do thing. Like, they have a car
8 dealer storing 100-something cars in a not used
9 parking lot in the rear of the mall.

10 MR. KHZOUZ: Right.

11 MR. BERSE: That part of the front of the
12 mall that they don't use could easily be
13 converted and make it a much safer situation
14 for the whole area.

15 MR. KHZOUZ: And I'll certainly reach out
16 to them again and see where they're going on
17 this development. Part of Nassau County also
18 is helping in the development of that. And,
19 again, we have given our recommendations to
20 both the county, and Long Island Railroad, and
21 the developers in the area, so we'll see where
22 this goes, but good points.

23 MR. BERSE: I think maybe moving forward
24 before you do that, you and I should talk and
25 we should figure out who the players are for

1 you and kick in some doors.

2 MS. FALCO: I'm a little confused. Are
3 you addressing an issue that you have with the
4 bus service at the Hicksville train station?

5 MR. BERSE: Yes.

6 MS. FALCO: Or at the mall?

7 MR. BERSE: No, no, no. The mall has no
8 issues with buses. The issue is on New Bridge
9 Road below the train station, especially when
10 it snows when the snow removal forces the buses
11 into the roadway, okay, because they're parked
12 along New Bridge Road in the parking lane so to
13 speak, and that's where the bus stops are.
14 When the snow gets pushed or when there are a
15 lot of buses there, you can't see around them,
16 you can't move around them. It's very
17 hazardous for both the pedestrian and the
18 motorists.

19 MS. FALCO: I thought it was with respect
20 to the service only because I have a colleague
21 who does take the bus daily from the Hicksville
22 train --

23 MR. BERSE: No, I'm not saying anything's
24 wrong with service. I'm saying what's wrong
25 with logistics and positioning.

1 MS. FALCO: So, that would be more of does
2 the Town of Hempstead have a sanitation
3 department? I don't know what NICE's role
4 would be in that.

5 MR. BERSE: The Town of Oyster Bay and the
6 state because it's a state road and when
7 there's a major snowfall, there's nowhere else
8 to physically put the snow.

9 MS. FALCO: Sure, I understand --

10 MR. BERSE: And that's been a major
11 problem for a long time that I spoke about this
12 with Jack's predecessor, I spoke to the town
13 about it, and now that the DRI is going through
14 and thing are going to physically change at the
15 train station with the first project projected
16 to be finished by the end of '22 that it's the
17 right time to push the buttons and get in there
18 and talk.

19 MS. FALCO: I'm trying to understand from
20 a NICE perspective, what would be NICE's
21 responsibility here? Just putting some
22 pressure on?

23 MR. BERSE: Relocate the buses --

24 MS. FALCO: Relocate the buses?

25 MR. BERSE: -- to do it. And that's what

1 I'm saying between the town and talking to the
2 mall, there is room there where they're not
3 renting the space and they haven't rented it
4 since a while before the pandemic started, so
5 it might be something worthwhile for them to
6 do. And it would create the safety that we
7 don't have now going on on New Bridge Road.
8 All because everything is congested and it's
9 always slow speed, we have, fortunately, not
10 had any fatalities, but we have had minor
11 incidents and people who are pedestrians there,
12 some crossing properly, some not, getting
13 injured, and that's part of the problem.

14 MS. FALCO: Those are all valid concerns.
15 I'm just thinking about it from a NICE
16 perspective. In other words, this mall area
17 that's currently vacant, right, how
18 logistically what's the distance between that
19 and the current railroad station buses.

20 MR. BERSE: It used to be before the mall
21 redesigned when they had the horseshoe years
22 ago, it used to be the bus companies.

23 MS. FALCO: How far is that from the exit
24 of the train station? If I walk off the Long
25 Island Railroad train in Hicksville Station,

1 how far is that area?

2 MR. BERSE: People walk it now when they
3 can't park legally at the train station like
4 Levittown people or people from outside the
5 Town of Oyster Bay who can't get a permit for
6 the station, a lot of them park in the mall, so
7 they walk there constantly and it's only like
8 two and a half blocks.

9 MS. FALCO: After an hour long ride on the
10 railroad and the subway, I'm not looking to
11 take another walk in the snow to reach my bus.
12 In other words, I want to come downstairs
13 and --

14 MR. BERSE: I understand --

15 MS. FALCO: I'm just saying because I take
16 public transportation. I work with people who
17 take public train station. I'm just thinking
18 logistically what it is that NICE can do and
19 realistically for the people who are going to
20 be taking advantage of the bus. I just don't
21 know that walking an extra two and a half
22 blocks in the snow or rain I'm interested in
23 doing. As you can see, I'm already agitated at
24 the end of traveling and I had to leave early
25 to do it.

1 MR. BERSE: I got you, but before the mall
2 redesigned many years ago and kicked the buses
3 out when it was MTA Long Island Bus, so that
4 tells you how far back that goes, that was the
5 bus company and people were doing it.

6 MR. KHZOUZ: I'll tell you what our
7 solution was for this was that we presented.
8 It wasn't the mall at the time because it was a
9 few years ago but it was to do major bus
10 cutouts along New Bridge Road. It's not
11 possible in all areas, but it is possible in
12 some of the areas that allows Long Island
13 Railroad customers to come directly off the
14 platform and get off the vehicle, generally
15 where they are now, but it takes the vehicles
16 off travel lanes, especially in the snow.
17 Again, it was met with some --

18 MR. BERSE: And they didn't go for it.

19 MR. KHZOUZ: It wasn't embraced but we'll
20 continue to work with it and I'll work with
21 Joel on it. He's got some great ideas and
22 we'll see what we can -- if there's any other
23 solutions that might come --

24 MS. FALCO: I just want to make one last
25 comment.

1 MR. KHZOUZ: Yes.

2 MS. FALCO: People who are walking two and
3 a half blocks to their vehicles in a parking
4 lot are not getting on a bus, they're getting
5 in their car. I just want to keep riders in
6 mind because that's really what our primary
7 focus should be.

8 MR. KHZOUZ: Of course, yes.

9 Mr. Shrenkel, that concludes my comments.
10 I do have some public comments that I will read
11 when you're ready. If the committee has any
12 other questions, I'd be happy to answer them.

13 MR. BERSE: You want my list? First
14 question I would have is given what's going on
15 in the school bus industry, are we having any
16 difficulties with bus operators?

17 MR. KHZOUZ: We are currently fully
18 staffed. We could always use more staff but we
19 are currently fully staffed and are not having
20 issues with missed trips because of staffing.

21 MR. BERSE: What is the status of the
22 contract with the county?

23 MR. KHZOUZ: The contract was extended.
24 The county felt that in the middle of COVID it
25 would not be prudent to send out a contract

1 RFP. It was extended. The contract was
2 extended for 2 years. The new contract will go
3 until 2024 or the current contract will go
4 through 2024 and then whatever happens at that
5 point happens.

6 MR. BERSE: I really would've hoped that
7 today would not have been virtual and it
8 would've been a real meeting only because --
9 and unfortunately, a lot of people found out
10 that I'm on this committee and wherever I walk
11 around, there are people that hit me with
12 different issues, and questions, and things, a
13 lot of them not are really pertinent because of
14 what we always hear during public comment, but
15 some of them were to the matter. I just would
16 like to see us try harder to get together.

17 The schedule of meetings, I was wondering,
18 if we should consider altering the budget vote
19 meeting so that it's after we know what the
20 STOA amount is instead of guessing every year.
21 I've always felt this.

22 MR. KHZOUZ: Unfortunately, we can't
23 because one once we know STOA, we're already in
24 the first quarter. And by the time we can
25 react on the scheduling side of things, it'll

1 be June. So, what happens with -- once we know
2 STOA, that is a change in schedule. We assume
3 we're going to be on track and we go. That's,
4 unfortunately, the reality of the schedule. If
5 we wait any longer, the first opportunity to
6 change the schedule will be June and if it
7 means we're going to decrease the schedule,
8 then that impact over half a year multiplies
9 itself. So, you know, it's up to the
10 committee, but I think that's a gamble.

11 It's up to the committee.

12 MR. SHRENKEL: I think history has proven
13 itself that your projections have been quite
14 accurate and there has not been, to my
15 recollection since I'm on the committee since
16 inception, of any material or significant
17 changes as to what was projected one month
18 before we found out certain other answers.

19 I would simply agree with you, Mr. Khzouz,
20 that we got to go with what we have and that
21 will be it. Nothing is perfect in an imperfect
22 world, but you seem to be pretty close to
23 perfection.

24 MR. BERSE: You're not wrong about his
25 accuracy up until this point, but I'm thinking

1 of the day where his projection winds up not
2 being so perfect and that's not besmirching him
3 but the fact of there's been so much volatility
4 in the way things are being done in Albany you
5 never know.

6 MR. SHRENKEL: Joel, excuse me. I don't
7 think we should spend too much time debating
8 this. But, obviously, the answer is it's not a
9 good answer. But the answer is there have to
10 be modifications and changes, whether it be a
11 service cut or a fare increase. And in some
12 cases -- look, NICE has stepped up for a lot of
13 things. They increased routes, for example,
14 which were not budgeted, for Jones Beach. So,
15 I think NICE has proved itself with having a
16 tremendous amount of flexibility, okay, in the
17 event of a miscalculation so to speak. And I
18 don't think it's an issue and I don't think we
19 ought to spend any more time on it.

20 With that, Mr. Khzouz, I'd like you to
21 read some of the comments, okay, that we have
22 from the public. Is that how we're going to do
23 it? You're going to read the comments?

24 MR. KHZOUZ: Yeah, I'll read the comments.
25 I will say that the comments are somewhat

1 edited for -- because there are were a lot of
2 duplications so we sort of consolidated some of
3 the comments down that we are reading, not a
4 ton of comments, just a few, and I'll go
5 through them.

6 MR. SHRENKEL: You can answer them if
7 you'd like or just read them.

8 MR. KHZOUZ: Mr. John Mitchnow from
9 Mineola, he writes there's a number of services
10 I think need to return including N45 service
11 between Roosevelt Field and Bellmore. I also
12 think it could come back under an on-demand
13 concept.

14 I also think there's inadequate bus
15 service on the N22 and the N24, particularly
16 from Roosevelt Field going west in the
17 evenings. Buses are often too close to
18 standing room only west out of Roosevelt Field.
19 This is worse on weekends and in the evening
20 between 8:00 and 10:00 p.m. And when the Long
21 Island Railroad is shut down on the main line,
22 it makes the situation even worse. I think
23 there needs to be better bus service running on
24 those weekends and overnight service offered on
25 the N22. I feel the N22 corridor is

1 underserved compared to the 4 and the 6. And
2 then, he goes on to say, the N40, N41 also has
3 an overcrowding issue and runs go missing
4 usually weekdays.

5 I will say Mr. Mitchnow has hit the nail
6 on the head. We are looking at all of those
7 corridors for some slight increases in service
8 for next year appropriate to its load size.

9 So, very good comment.

10 The next one comes from Mr. John Jones.
11 He writes -- no village or town -- he writes
12 when do you expect the New Flyer XE40 electric
13 buses to begin arriving.

14 As we mentioned a little earlier, they
15 will arrive, we hope, at the end of 2022.

16 Mr. Yuki Endo from Jackson Heights writes
17 I would like more accessible bus stops at the
18 UBS Arena and more service on the N1 and N6 for
19 arena events.

20 Also, please add new Elmont Long Island
21 Railroad stop to the Elmont Flexi.

22 Please bring back the N22X, the express
23 service, to help with overcrowding, again, was
24 mentioned a little earlier.

25 I am grateful for the bus drivers working

1 hard during the pandemic.

2 Mr. Endo makes some good points. We've
3 been speaking to UBS Arena on how we could
4 better serve the arena. We have a lot of
5 service on the N6 that goes in later into the
6 evening. The service does span out a little
7 bit in the evening, so instead of 10-minute
8 service, it becomes 20- or 30-minute service.
9 We'll continue to work with the arena. So far
10 it hasn't been an issue. We haven't really
11 carried a lot of people to the arena yet, but
12 we'll continue to work with them as we go
13 forward. The bus stop that the arena built is
14 a cutout, as we were talking about, for
15 Hicksville. It's not very conveniently located
16 to the entrance gate. So, again, we're working
17 through those different solutions. It's a
18 little bit hectic there right now. They're
19 still working through traffic flow issues, but
20 we're working with them for some different
21 solutions on that.

22 And I'm not going to pronounce Michael's
23 last name correctly, but it's Michael Koyov.
24 He's got three separate comments here. Will be
25 a county wide bus redesign as is being

1 performed in New York City and Philadelphia?
2 Number two, are any express routes being
3 planned for Hempstead, Lynbrook, Great Neck,
4 Hicksville to Downtown Manhattan some.

5 Then, number 3, some bus route variations
6 in N31, 32, 48, 49, 54, 55 need to be realigned
7 to allow more frequent and reliable service.
8 The N31, 32 has seen drastic frequency cuts
9 since 2019.

10 I'll go through these real quickly. There
11 is no large system redesign. We have taken a
12 different approach to that. And that is we
13 have taken it as more of an adjustment. There
14 are some things coming up later on in the year
15 that address some of these issues with
16 on-demand service that we'll introduce mid year
17 that'll be pretty exciting, but we're not going
18 to redesign the whole system. We're here to
19 adjust the system as is needed. It's less
20 shock to our riders and I've lived through
21 system redesigns and there's a lot of pain
22 that's involved in those.

23 There are no express routes planned right
24 now for Manhattan. I don't really see that
25 happening. There's just too many friction

1 points to have that happen and have it be an
2 efficient ride into midtown.

3 He's not wrong when he says there may be
4 some frequency improvements that we can do on
5 some of the routes that he mentioned here on
6 the bottom, so we'll certainly pass that along.

7 Just a few more, I'm sorry, just two more,
8 and I'll open this up to anybody else on the
9 committee.

10 Charlton D'souza, the president of
11 Passengers United, writes why did Nassau give
12 Transdev a 2-year contract extension without a
13 public hearing? We strongly feel the MTA
14 should come back and run the buses in Nassau
15 County.

16 He also says what's the status of the Omni
17 card installation, the fare readers on the
18 buses.

19 He says the N2 needs to be reinstated and
20 connected to the new Elmont Long Island
21 Railroad station.

22 Lastly, he says NICE needs to have
23 supervisors down there to traffic for UBS
24 events.

25 I'll start with these real quickly again.

1 Nassau County, under kind of an emergency
2 situation, granted the extension. That was
3 their right to do. I had nothing to do with it
4 other than to say, yes, we can extend the
5 contract for two years and go from there.
6 That's not a question I could really answer.
7 Again, I was on the receiving end. I wasn't
8 the instigator there.

9 I won't address the MTA. I'll let them
10 decide on what they want to do there. The Omni
11 card readers, that's an MTA product. It's the
12 smart card chip-embedded MetroCard replacement.
13 We're working with the MTA as an affiliate.
14 They have a timeline planned out for all their
15 affiliates, ourselves and Westchester. And so,
16 we're working with them on when they're going
17 to allow us to roll that out for our customers.

18 Again, the N2, it's something that we'll
19 have to look in to.

20 As far as the supervisor's monitoring
21 traffic for UBS events, we don't own the
22 traffic for UBS events. That's really a Nassau
23 County PD issue, which we have asked Nassau
24 County PD to be involved in that to help right-
25 and left-hand turns so it doesn't block

1 Hempstead Transit Center. It's gotten a little
2 better.

3 And then, also UBS, we're helping them get
4 traffic into the center a little more
5 efficiently so it doesn't back up onto
6 Hempstead Turnpike, and that's where we get
7 hung up. But as far as our supervisors,
8 they're not really allowed to direct traffic,
9 but we'll certainly keep on top of that. So
10 far the command center has done a good job.

11 Lastly, Joe Trovaccia from Levittown, he
12 writes I can finally say I am now generally
13 satisfied with the level of N49 service
14 specifically increased early morning and late
15 night service. Now, that NICE has achieved an
16 acceptable level of service on the N49, I fear
17 service cuts will return with the new county
18 administration.

19 Is there any reason to be concerned?

20 That's a good question. I don't believe
21 there's any reason to be concerned. I believe
22 we're in a stable footing for the next couple
23 of years of actually so that we can build on
24 what we have now. Before the pandemic, we
25 actually had an increase in ridership, which is

1 rare across the nation with larger services.
2 Our ridership was increasing before the
3 pandemic. That basically says we were doing
4 some things right. Frequency was up. Routing
5 was correct. On-time performance was up there.
6 Connections were correct. We were getting
7 people to where they need to be. There should
8 be no reason why we go backwards.

9 My hope is we continue to build on that
10 success, come out of the pandemic stronger,
11 better, smarter, more innovative, and then
12 continue to offer passengers what they're
13 looking for, so we can rebuild that ridership.

14 Anyway, Mr. Shrenkel, that's all the
15 comments that we have for this evening. If
16 there's any questions from the committee, I'd
17 be happy to take them.

18 MR. SHRENKEL: My only comment is viewing
19 NICE transportation for 7 years and knowing
20 what the initial savings was in the first year
21 versus NICE vis-a-vis the MTA, I think there
22 was a considerable savings to the tune of close
23 to 25 to 30 million dollars in the first year
24 of your operation. And given that everything
25 is always going up and things go up in

1 proportion, I'll just leave it at the public's
2 imagination and the committee's imagination of
3 how much money was possibly saved over a 7-year
4 period. But I think that is for you to say
5 more than myself to say, but I couldn't help
6 saying it because that's a lot of money for the
7 taxpayers, and I certainly watched the
8 technology enhancements, the new equipment, the
9 outreach to the community of social
10 responsibilities, and I think that shows
11 excellent goodwill, excellent transportation,
12 and the fact that you listen to members of the
13 committee, you listen to the public comments,
14 and transportation is always a difficult
15 subject. What I always said when I conducted
16 these meetings is I like to make it a
17 brainstorming session as well as a formal
18 meeting. And the fact of there's always room
19 for improvement and that's what we should
20 strive for is team work and improvement and I
21 think you have a good relationship with the
22 county, and I'd like to see more improvements,
23 but I think there's what I have seen is
24 tremendous, tremendous improvement over 7
25 years.

1 Any questions for Mr. Khzouz or comments
2 from the committee members?

3 MS. FALCO: I have a quick question. I
4 also receive a lot of inquiries from
5 constituents and riders.

6 Mr. Khzouz, someone inquired recently
7 regarding the availability of some small mini
8 fleets that were, like, on call. I know that
9 we had a pilot program for that once before a
10 few years ago. Is that something that's
11 currently available in certain areas?

12 MR. KHZOUZ: So, yeah, micro transit or
13 on-demand transit is something we piloted very
14 first right out of the gate a few years ago.
15 It's warped since then. We do a project in
16 Elmont and we do a project in Port Washington
17 that is pseudo on call or on demand.

18 Later on this year, middle of the year,
19 we're going to launch two more pilots that will
20 be a true on-demand situation. And we're still
21 fine tuning the service area and all the
22 requirements around it, but it will be a true
23 on-demand service that combines fixed route,
24 Paratransit, and door to door.

25 MS. FALCO: Fantastic, that's great.

1 MR. SHRENKEL: Mr. Berse, I don't know if
2 I interrupted your other thoughts after we
3 talked about the Hicksville situation.

4 Did you have any further comments?

5 MR. BERSE: I think I beat him up enough.

6 MR. SHRENKEL: We're not looking to beat
7 anybody up.

8 MR. BERSE: It was a joke, Shelly.

9 MR. SHRENKEL: Certainly, I personally
10 want to wish everyone on the committee and all
11 the employees at NICE and the public who is
12 here watching us, I'd like to wish everyone a
13 happy holiday for the holiday season and the
14 best for the new year.

15 I look forward to good service, and
16 safety, and a good 2022 coming up. And, of
17 course, talking about budgeting and what have
18 you, the big issue is the ridership. And,
19 unfortunately, we have all lived through this
20 pandemic and we've seen some ups and downs.
21 It's difficult to predict ridership simply
22 because there is a percentage of people now
23 working several days a week from home as
24 opposed to going to their office, which is less
25 transportation, and you know less fair revenue.

1 So, you've projected it as 75 percent. Let's
2 hope that that's a good projection --

3 MR. BERSE: -- Long Island Railroad,
4 that's for sure.

5 MR. SHRENKEL: I think Jack, of course,
6 tries to give us comparisons to what's going on
7 in different areas and Westchester here, so it
8 sounds plausible is my thought and everything
9 you said.

10 With that, I'd like to make a motion to
11 adjourn the meeting.

12 Do I have a second on that?

13 MR. DUROSEAU: I second that.

14 MR. BERSE: I third.

15 MR. SHRENKEL: Thank you, Mr. Duroseau.
16 Mr. Berse is a third.

17 And everyone who is for those in favor
18 please say aye.

19 (A round of ayes.)

20 Anyone opposed? No abstentions?

21 With that, thank you very much.

22 The meeting is adjourned.

23 (Time noted: 6:22)

24

25

C E R T I F I C A T I O N

I, ESTAMARIE CASTELLI-VELEZ, a Shorthand Reporter and Notary Public within and for the State of New York, do hereby certify the foregoing to be a true and accurate transcript to the best of my knowledge and ability.

I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or by marriage and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.

Estamarie Castelli-Velez

ESTAMARIE CASTELLI-VELEZ

1	5:30 1:6	accuracy 28:25	answer 5:5 6:12
1 5:20 7:4 9:14	5:31 3:1	accurate 28:14	26:12 29:8,9,9
1.45 7:13,19	6	42:7	30:6 35:6
10 32:7	6 31:1	achieved 36:15	answers 28:18
100 10:17 13:19	6,000 11:20	action 42:10	anybody 34:8 40:7
20:8	6:22 41:23	actual 9:9	anything's 21:23
100,000 5:24	7	ada 18:12	anyway 37:14
10:00 30:20	7 37:19 38:3,24	add 31:20	apologize 8:5
15 13:11	7,000 10:20	added 18:10	appreciate 4:14
180 17:13,16	70 5:9	adding 15:25	appreciative 14:8
2	72 10:8	addition 13:18	approach 33:12
2 19:22 27:2 34:12	75 6:14 10:13 41:1	additional 13:8	appropriate 31:8
20 13:22 32:8	8	address 33:15	approve 9:4
2019 10:19 33:9	80 13:23	35:9	approved 9:3
2021 1:3 11:18	80s 15:9	addressing 21:3	april 9:9,14
2022 4:17 8:23	82 6:19	adjourn 41:11	area 6:7 18:25
14:24 15:16 31:15	85 6:22	adjourned 41:22	20:14,21 23:16
40:16	87 5:11	adjust 33:19	24:1 39:21
2024 27:3,4	8:00 30:20	adjusting 11:10	areas 25:11,12
20836 42:14	9	adjustment 33:13	39:11 41:7
22 22:16	9 1:3	administration	arena 31:18,19
240 17:9	90 11:6	36:18	32:3,4,9,11,13
25 13:23 37:23	90s 6:15,15 7:25	advantage 24:20	arrive 31:15
3	91 5:13	affect 6:25	arriving 31:13
3 33:5	a	affiliate 35:13	art 14:24
30 12:20 32:8	abb 16:25	affiliates 35:15	artics 14:16,17
37:23	ability 4:22 42:8	agenda 3:7	articulated 14:11
300 14:4	able 6:24 12:8	agitated 24:23	asked 35:23
32 33:6,8	13:15 16:16 18:19	ago 19:22 23:22	assistance 9:10,11
350s 13:13	19:5	25:2,9 39:10,14	assume 28:2
36 18:8	abstentions 41:20	agree 28:19	assuming 8:24
4	acceptable 36:16	air 17:11,12	audio 4:5
4 31:1	accepted 9:1	albany 29:4	audited 10:6
48 33:6	accessible 31:17	allow 33:7 35:17	availability 39:7
49 33:6	accident 8:1	allowed 36:8	available 39:11
5	accidents 5:4,24	allows 25:12	avenue 12:4 15:7
54 33:6	7:11,11	altering 27:18	average 11:10
55 33:6	accommodating	amount 27:20	award 14:22
	11:11	29:16	awarding 15:3
		announce 14:21	aware 13:10

aye 41:18	big 14:6,6 40:18	buses 13:4 14:12	charge 16:16,17
ayes 41:19	biggest 9:11	14:23 19:5,17	16:21,22
b	bit 5:25 6:4 7:1	21:8,10,15 22:23	charged 18:2
back 6:13,14,17	10:12,22 11:3,24	22:24 23:19 25:2	charger 17:22
6:22 11:7,9 15:19	15:20 17:10 32:7	30:17 31:13 34:14	charging 15:5,12
16:22 17:20 25:4	32:18	34:18	15:15,18 16:3,19
30:12 31:22 34:14	block 35:25	buttons 22:17	17:1,19
36:5	blocks 24:8,22	c	charlton 34:10
backwards 37:8	26:3	c 2:1 15:24 42:1,1	chip 35:12
barely 6:3	blood 42:10	call 5:5 6:12 39:8	city 10:9 33:1
based 11:8	board 4:4	39:17	clients 7:17
basically 19:19	bob 12:17,19	calls 6:8	close 28:22 30:17
37:3	bob's 12:20	capital 4:21 13:9	37:22
battery 14:22	bottom 34:6	car 20:7 26:5	closed 19:13
bay 22:5 24:5	bought 12:11	card 4:25 34:17	closer 8:1
beach 29:14	brainstorming	35:11,12	cold 8:5
beat 40:5,6	38:17	carrie 2:3	colleague 21:20
beginning 6:5 10:5	brand 14:5	carried 32:11	college 10:19,21
behalf 13:15	breakdowns 14:1	cars 16:9 20:8	colleges 10:18
believe 36:20,21	bridge 19:6 21:8	cases 5:23 29:12	combines 39:23
bellmore 30:11	21:12 23:7 25:10	castelli 42:4,15	come 6:4 7:21 11:9
benefactor 11:23	brief 3:7	center 12:25 18:5	19:19 24:12 25:13
berse 2:5 3:21 4:2	bring 31:22	18:7,16,17,24	25:23 30:12 34:14
4:3 8:12 14:9,11	broadway 19:10	19:17 36:1,4,10	37:10
14:13 16:8 17:5	budget 4:19 8:15	ceo 2:7 4:9	comeback 10:23
17:18 18:21 19:25	8:20,21,23 9:2,5,7	ceramic 18:12	comes 31:10
20:3,11,23 21:5,7	9:8,12,13,16 27:18	certain 28:18	coming 6:17 11:7
21:23 22:5,10,23	budgeted 29:14	39:11	15:21 33:14 40:16
22:25 23:20 24:2	budgeting 40:17	certainly 13:6	command 36:10
24:14 25:1,18	build 36:23 37:9	20:15 34:6 36:9	comment 25:25
26:13,21 27:6	building 15:11	38:7 40:9	27:14 31:9 37:18
28:24 40:1,5,8	18:13	certify 42:6,9	comments 3:8
41:3,14,16	built 32:13	chain 15:17	26:9,10 29:21,23
besmirching 29:2	bus 1:1 3:3 5:21	chairman 3:5	29:24,25 30:3,4
best 40:14 42:7	12:16,22,23,23,24	challenging 15:20	32:24 37:15 38:13
better 4:16,22 7:3	21:4,13,21 23:22	change 22:14 28:2	39:1 40:4
8:2 18:20 19:6	24:11,20 25:3,5,9	28:6	commercial 15:7
30:23 32:4 36:2	26:4,15,16 30:14	changed 20:1	committee 3:3,6
37:11	30:23 31:17,25	changes 11:4,12	3:11 5:1 26:11
beyond 12:13	32:13,25 33:5	28:17 29:10	27:10 28:10,11,15
			34:9 37:16 38:13

39:2 40:10 committee's 38:2 commons 19:11 community 10:19 10:21 11:8,14,16 12:13 13:7 38:9 companies 23:22 company 6:10 25:5 compare 10:11 compared 31:1 comparison 10:9,9 10:10 comparisons 41:6 complained 19:9 complete 13:12,22 completely 15:24 18:8 concept 30:13 concerned 36:19 36:21 concerns 23:14 concludes 26:9 concrete 18:13 conditioning 17:11 conducted 38:15 conference 1:5 confident 9:15,19 9:25 confused 21:2 congested 23:8 connected 34:20 connections 10:25 37:6 consider 27:18 considerable 37:22 consolidated 30:2 constantly 24:7	constituents 39:5 continue 5:19 11:15 25:20 32:9 32:12 37:9,12 continued 5:14 continues 7:13 contract 26:22,23 26:25 27:1,2,3 34:12 35:5 contributor 9:12 conveniently 32:15 converted 20:13 copy 8:13 corner 8:3 15:7 16:15 correct 37:5,6 correctly 32:23 corridor 30:25 corridors 31:7 counsel 4:4 county 3:3 8:22 9:1,5 10:25 11:9 13:15 15:9 20:17 20:20 26:22,24 32:25 34:15 35:1 35:23,24 36:17 38:22 couple 12:4,10,24 13:5 36:22 course 26:8 40:17 41:5 covid 10:8,17 26:24 create 23:6 cromwell 12:4 crossed 9:24 crossing 23:12 current 4:19 15:11 23:19 27:3	currently 5:12 8:25 9:20 10:16 23:17 26:17,19 39:11 customer 18:4 customers 14:7 25:13 35:17 cut 29:11 cutout 32:14 cutouts 25:10 cuts 9:18 33:8 36:17	design 16:2 develop 15:12 developed 11:13 developers 20:21 developing 15:6 development 19:8 20:17,18 difference 14:6 different 11:3 13:5 27:12 32:17,20 33:12 41:7 difficult 38:14 40:21 difficulties 26:16 digital 18:10 direct 36:8 directly 16:14 25:13 discuss 19:4 discussion 13:2 disilvio 2:12 4:5,6 distance 23:18 doing 14:18 15:2 18:22 24:23 25:5 37:3 dollar 18:15 dollars 37:23 donated 11:18,19 donates 12:7 donation 12:9 door 39:24,24 doors 18:13 21:1 downs 40:20 downstairs 24:12 downtown 33:4 drastic 33:8 dri 22:13 drive 11:17 14:3 16:8 driver 12:17
		d	
		d'souza 34:10 daily 18:19 21:21 dancing 19:2 dawn 2:11 3:19 day 10:20 11:16 17:16 29:1 days 40:23 dealer 20:8 debating 29:7 december 1:3 decide 35:10 decommissioned 15:8,9 decorated 12:23 decrease 28:7 deliver 14:23 15:14 delivered 7:7 delivering 13:11 demand 30:12 33:16 39:13,17,20 39:23 department 13:14 17:3,23 18:1 22:3 dependable 14:4 deployed 16:21 depot 5:22 18:7	

drivers 7:20 10:16 14:7 16:7 31:25 drop 7:18 dropped 6:12 drops 17:9 due 6:1 duplications 30:2 duroseau 2:9 3:16 3:17 41:13,15	erika 2:2 8:11 12:3 12:15,22,24 especially 13:4 19:7 21:9 25:16 estamarie 42:4,15 evening 3:2,20 4:6 30:19 32:6,7 37:15 evenings 30:17 event 29:17 events 31:19 34:24 35:21,22 everybody 3:20 4:6,13,14 8:19 10:4 13:10 example 29:13 excellent 38:11,11 exceptions 8:25 excited 15:22 16:5 exciting 33:17 excuse 8:4 29:6 exit 23:23 expand 14:17 expect 31:12 expenditures 4:21 experience 18:4 express 31:22 33:2 33:23 extend 35:4 extended 26:23 27:1,2 extension 34:12 35:2 exterior 18:10 extra 24:21	failed 7:9 fair 40:25 fairly 3:7 9:15,19 10:1 falco 2:11 3:19,20 3:23 8:7 21:2,6,19 22:1,9,19,24 23:14 23:23 24:9,15 25:24 26:2 39:3 39:25 fall 6:2 11:21 fantastic 39:25 far 6:5 14:13 23:23 24:1 25:4 32:9 35:20 36:7 36:10 fare 9:18 10:3 29:11 34:17 fatalities 23:10 favor 41:17 fear 36:16 feel 8:17 13:6 30:25 34:13 feeling 7:3 feels 18:18 fell 12:7 felt 26:24 27:21 field 13:1 18:24 19:16 30:11,16,18 figure 20:25 final 18:6 finalized 9:10 finally 36:12 fine 39:21 fingers 9:24 finished 11:16 13:10 22:16 first 3:10 5:21 12:23 13:21 19:20 22:15 26:13 27:24 28:5 37:20,23	39:14 fixed 5:8 7:25 13:19 39:23 fleet 13:12,20 14:4 14:5,17 fleets 39:8 flexi 31:21 flexibility 29:16 floors 18:12 flow 32:19 fluid 10:13 flyer 13:22 14:23 16:25 31:12 focus 26:7 food 11:17,20,25 footing 36:22 forces 21:10 ford 13:13 foregoing 42:6 formal 38:17 fortunately 23:9 forward 4:16 20:23 32:13 40:15 found 27:9 28:18 frequency 33:8 34:4 37:4 frequent 33:7 friction 33:25 friends 8:17 front 16:21 19:12 20:11 full 10:17 17:9,16 fully 16:2 26:17,19 fun 12:19 further 40:4 42:9		
e	e 2:1,1 8:13 42:1 earlier 31:14,24 early 24:24 36:14 easily 20:12 edited 30:1 effecting 9:8 efficient 34:2 efficiently 36:5 either 17:12 electric 14:22 16:9 31:12 elmont 31:20,21 34:20 39:16 embedded 35:12 embraced 25:19 emergencies 17:19 emergency 35:1 emissions 15:24 16:1 employees 11:19 12:10 40:11 employer 6:11 endo 31:16 32:2 engrains 13:7 enhancements 38:8 enrollment 10:21 ensure 16:14 entrance 32:16 equipment 38:8	f	f 42:1 fabric 13:7 facility 12:1 fact 29:3 38:12,18	g	g 15:25 gamble 28:10 gate 32:16 39:14 general 8:24

generally 9:3 25:14 36:12 generous 12:9 getting 4:8 5:16 6:22 19:4,17 23:12 26:4,4 37:6 gillig 13:24 give 3:12 4:10 8:15 8:19 10:4 34:11 41:6 given 20:19 26:14 37:24 go 5:7,16,17 7:13 7:15,20 8:14 18:23,24 19:25 25:18 27:2,3 28:3 28:20 30:4 31:3 32:12 33:10 35:5 37:8,25 goal 5:8 6:2,3,21 goes 20:22 25:4 31:2 32:5 going 4:10,18 5:9 7:7 15:19 16:20 16:21,22 17:13 18:6,23 20:16 22:13,14 23:7 24:19 26:14 28:3 28:7 29:22,23 30:16 32:22 33:17 35:16 37:25 39:19 40:24 41:6 good 3:2,20 4:6,13 7:5,22,23 13:6 20:22 29:9 31:9 32:2 36:10,20 38:21 40:15,16 41:2 goodwill 38:11 gotten 36:1	granted 15:10 35:2 grateful 31:25 gravelly 8:6 great 7:11,23 12:3 12:12,19 14:3,20 18:3,17,18,18,22 25:21 33:3 39:25 grid 16:15,15 guessing 27:20	33:3 36:1,6 hi 3:20 hicksville 19:1 21:4,21 23:25 32:15 33:4 40:3 high 6:15 higher 7:15 10:12 11:9 hiring 6:25 history 28:12 hit 27:11 31:5 holiday 12:16 40:13,13 home 10:22 40:23 hope 15:14 17:18 31:15 37:9 41:2 hoped 27:6 hopeful 4:16 horseshoe 23:21 hour 24:9 hours 8:24 9:17 huge 19:11 hung 36:7 hungry 20:4	increased 6:1 29:13 36:14 increases 9:17,18 10:2,3 31:7 increasing 37:2 industry 26:15 infrastructure 15:5 initial 37:20 initially 17:14 injured 23:13 innovative 37:11 inquired 39:6 inquiries 39:4 installation 34:17 instigator 35:8 interested 24:22 42:11 interesting 16:1 interrupt 8:7 interrupted 40:2 interruptions 5:18 introduce 3:10 15:23 33:16 involved 11:15 33:22 35:24 involvement 11:15 island 10:10,18,24 11:17,20 12:21,22 17:11 20:20 23:25 25:3,12 30:21 31:20 34:20 41:3 issue 21:3,8 29:18 31:3 32:10 35:23 40:18 issues 6:8,11 21:8 26:20 27:12 32:19 33:15 it'll 15:25 27:25 itchkal 12:17
	h		
	half 24:8,21 26:3 28:8 hand 3:11 35:25 happen 34:1 happening 33:25 happens 10:15 27:4,5 28:1 happier 7:17 happy 6:5 7:12,22 11:22 12:2 13:18 14:2,21 15:13,22 26:12 37:17 40:13 hard 32:1 harder 27:16 harvest 11:17,20 haves 19:11 hazardous 21:17 head 31:6 hear 4:9 27:14 hearing 34:13 heat 17:10,12 hectic 32:18 heights 31:16 held 1:3 help 11:21 12:5 31:23 35:24 38:5 helped 7:8 13:25 helping 20:18 36:3 hempstead 12:5 12:25 18:5 22:2	i	
		ideas 25:21 imagination 38:2 38:2 impact 28:8 imperfect 28:21 improvement 38:19,20,24 improvements 8:2 34:4 38:22 inadequate 30:14 inception 28:16 incidents 23:11 including 30:10 increase 4:22 8:8 29:11 36:25	

j	knowledge 42:8 knows 9:8 koyov 32:23 kpi 5:2	load 17:9 31:8 loaded 17:24 located 32:15 logistically 23:18 24:18 logistics 21:25 long 4:15 10:10,18 10:24 12:21,22 17:11 20:20 22:11 23:24 24:9 25:3 25:12 30:20 31:20 34:20 41:3 longer 7:16 28:5 longtime 12:17 look 5:3 8:9,23 14:2,14,18 29:12 35:19 40:15 looking 4:16 24:10 31:6 37:13 40:6 looks 18:18 lot 12:19 16:15,23 19:6 20:9 21:15 24:6 26:4 27:9,13 29:12 30:1 32:4 32:11 33:21 38:6 39:4 low 15:24 lower 6:20 lynbrook 33:3	25:1,8 management 19:10 20:1 manhattan 33:4 33:24 march 9:14 marriage 42:11 material 28:16 matter 27:15 42:12 mean 5:20 means 5:21 28:7 meet 15:5 meeting 1:1 3:4 4:8 27:8,19 38:18 41:11,22 meetings 27:17 38:16 members 3:10 38:12 39:2 mentioned 31:14 31:24 34:5 met 19:21 25:17 metrocard 35:12 michael 32:23 michael's 32:22 micro 39:12 mid 6:15 14:1 33:16 middle 26:24 39:18 midtown 34:2 miles 5:24 17:9,13 17:16 miller 2:3 million 37:23 mind 26:6 mineola 30:9 mini 39:7 minor 23:10
jack 2:7 4:10 8:7 14:9 41:5 jack's 22:12 jackson 31:16 jean 2:9 job 12:3,19 36:10 joe 36:11 joel 2:5 3:21,22,23 16:12 25:21 29:6 john 3:16 30:8 31:10 joined 13:19 joining 4:14 joke 40:8 jones 29:14 31:10 june 28:1,6	I la 19:15 lane 21:12 lanes 25:16 large 11:25 16:12 33:11 larger 37:1 lastly 34:22 36:11 late 36:14 latest 4:25 latoya 2:10 launch 39:19 learn 10:22 17:1,7 learned 16:24 learning 16:5 leave 24:24 38:1 leaves 5:21 left 13:13 35:25 legally 24:3 legislators 9:4 lessons 16:24 level 6:13 10:1 36:13,16 levels 10:8 11:1 levittown 24:4 36:11 life 18:8 line 30:21 list 26:13 listen 38:12,13 little 5:25 6:20 7:1 8:5 10:12 11:3 15:19 21:2 31:14 31:24 32:6,18 36:1,4 lived 33:20 40:19	m macy's 20:6 mail 8:13 main 10:16 30:21 maintenance 17:3 17:23 18:1 major 11:22 22:7 22:10 25:9 making 19:18 mall 13:1 19:25 20:9,12 21:6,7 23:2,16,20 24:6	
k keep 6:24 9:24 26:5 36:9 khzouz 2:7 4:10 4:12,13 8:11,14 14:10,13 16:11 17:8,21 19:21 20:2,10,15 25:6,19 26:1,8,17,23 27:22 28:19 29:20,24 30:8 39:1,6,12 kick 21:1 kicked 25:2 kids 13:3 kind 8:19 13:1 19:4 35:1 knock 10:2 know 3:21 9:8 22:3 24:21 27:19 27:23 28:1,9 29:5 39:8 40:1,25 knowing 37:19			

minute 32:7,8 miscalculation 29:17 missed 5:19 7:4,8 8:1 13:25 26:20 missing 31:3 mitchnow 30:8 31:5 mitigate 15:11 mitigation 18:9 modern 18:12,17 modifications 29:10 money 38:3,6 monitoring 35:20 month 28:17 months 18:9 morning 36:14 motion 41:10 motorists 21:18 move 21:16 movement 19:5 moving 20:23 mta 12:20 25:3 34:13 35:9,11,13 37:21 multi 18:15 multimillion 18:15 multiplies 28:8 must've 3:13 mute 3:23	n40 31:2 n41 31:2 n45 30:10 n49 36:13,16 n6 31:18 32:5 nail 31:5 name 32:23 nassau 3:3 10:19 10:20 20:17 34:11 34:14 35:1,22,23 nation 37:1 neat 13:1 neck 33:3 need 5:16,17 20:7 30:10 33:6 37:7 needed 12:5 33:19 needs 9:22 11:21 19:22 30:23 34:19 34:22 never 29:5 new 7:6 9:10 10:9 13:11,19,22,22 14:6,22,23 15:23 16:6,25 18:8,9,9 18:11,12,13 19:6,8 20:3,4 21:8,12 23:7 25:10 27:2 31:12,20 33:1 34:20 36:17 38:8 40:14 42:6 nice 1:1 2:7 4:10 12:1 15:1 22:20 23:15 24:18 29:12 29:15 34:22 36:15 37:19,21 40:11 nice's 22:3,20 night 36:15 normal 11:7 12:6 normally 5:1,3,25 6:1	notary 42:5 noted 3:1 41:23 november 9:3 10:7 11:17 nowheres 22:7 number 6:4,21 7:21 30:9 33:2,5 numbers 10:7 nypa 9:4,6	outreach 38:9 outs 5:4,19 7:4,8 8:1 14:1 outside 18:14 24:4 overall 7:21 8:2 9:5 11:10 overcrowding 31:3,23 overnight 16:17 16:18 30:24 oyster 22:5 24:5
o			p
o 42:1 oak 15:7 obviously 9:17 10:14 15:17 17:15 18:4 29:8 october 10:6 offer 8:25 37:12 offered 30:24 offering 12:14 office 40:24 offs 7:19 okay 21:11 29:16 29:21 old 8:17 19:12 omni 34:16 35:10 once 16:2 18:16 27:23 28:1 39:9 open 34:8 operating 8:21 9:9 9:11,12 operation 37:24 operators 26:16 opportunity 14:14 28:5 opposed 40:24 41:20 ought 29:19 outcome 42:12 outline 8:16,20 outlook 4:19			p 2:1,1 p.m. 1:6 3:1 30:20 pain 33:21 paint 18:9 pallets 11:20,24 pandemic 5:15 19:14 23:4 32:1 36:24 37:3,10 40:20 paper 17:9 paratransit 5:5 6:7 13:11,12 39:24 parcel 19:12 park 24:3,6 parked 21:11 parking 20:9 21:12 26:3 parks 18:5,24 part 12:13,18 17:21 18:4 20:11 20:17 23:13 partial 19:10 particularly 30:15 parties 42:10 pass 34:6 passengers 5:17 18:19 34:11 37:12

<p>patterns 11:12</p> <p>pd 35:23,24</p> <p>pedestrian 21:17</p> <p>pedestrians 23:11</p> <p>people 11:2,5 23:11 24:2,4,4,16 24:19 25:5 26:2 27:9,11 32:11 37:7 40:22</p> <p>percent 5:11,13,20 6:14 7:4 10:8,13 10:17 11:6 41:1</p> <p>percentage 40:22</p> <p>perfect 28:21 29:2</p> <p>perfecting 7:16</p> <p>perfection 28:23</p> <p>performance 5:4,8 5:9,12,13,14 6:6 6:17,19 7:1,11,22 7:23,24,25 8:3 37:5</p> <p>performed 33:1</p> <p>period 6:16 38:4</p> <p>permit 24:5</p> <p>persaud 2:8</p> <p>person 12:6</p> <p>personally 40:9</p> <p>perspective 22:20 23:16</p> <p>pertinent 27:13</p> <p>peter 2:12 4:5,7</p> <p>phase 15:4,15 18:6 18:11</p> <p>philadelphia 33:1</p> <p>physically 22:8,14</p> <p>pick 7:18 12:1</p> <p>piece 15:6,10</p> <p>pilot 39:9</p> <p>piloted 39:13</p> <p>pilots 39:19</p>	<p>pippins 2:10</p> <p>plan 17:13</p> <p>planned 33:3,23 35:14</p> <p>plant 15:8</p> <p>platform 25:14</p> <p>plausible 41:8</p> <p>play 9:6</p> <p>played 9:6,7</p> <p>players 20:4,25</p> <p>plays 12:18</p> <p>please 31:20,22 41:18</p> <p>plenty 17:16</p> <p>point 9:1 27:5 28:25</p> <p>points 18:3 20:22 32:2 34:1</p> <p>port 39:16</p> <p>portable 17:18</p> <p>position 19:6</p> <p>positioning 21:25</p> <p>positive 9:23</p> <p>possible 8:8 25:11 25:11</p> <p>possibly 38:3</p> <p>power 16:14,16,18 16:19</p> <p>pre 10:8,17 19:14</p> <p>predecessor 22:12</p> <p>predict 40:21</p> <p>present 5:1</p> <p>presentation 4:9</p> <p>presented 25:7</p> <p>president 34:10</p> <p>pressure 22:22</p> <p>pretty 6:5 28:22 33:17</p> <p>primary 26:6</p> <p>priorities 19:24</p>	<p>problem 22:11 23:13</p> <p>process 15:20 16:5</p> <p>procurement 13:14 15:3,3</p> <p>produce 9:16</p> <p>product 35:11</p> <p>productivity 5:6 7:13,14</p> <p>program 10:23 39:9</p> <p>progresses 4:19</p> <p>project 13:9 17:5 18:16 19:2 22:15 39:15,16</p> <p>projected 8:23 17:8 22:15 28:17 41:1</p> <p>projection 29:1 41:2</p> <p>projections 28:13</p> <p>pronounce 32:22</p> <p>properly 17:4 23:12</p> <p>property 15:6,10</p> <p>proportion 38:1</p> <p>proud 6:16</p> <p>proved 29:15</p> <p>proven 28:12</p> <p>provide 4:22</p> <p>prudent 26:25</p> <p>pseudo 39:17</p> <p>public 3:8 24:16 24:17 26:10 27:14 29:22 34:13 38:13 40:11 42:5</p> <p>public's 38:1</p> <p>pull 5:4,19 7:4,8 7:10 8:1 14:1</p> <p>pumpkins 12:6,7 12:11</p>	<p>purchases 14:19</p> <p>purification 15:8</p> <p>purposes 13:5</p> <p>push 22:17</p> <p>pushed 21:14</p> <p>put 12:15 14:17 22:8</p> <p>putting 22:21</p> <tr> <td colspan="4">q</td></tr> <tr> <td colspan="4"> <p>q3 4:24,25 5:25</p> <p>q4 6:4,5 7:1,24</p> <p>quarter 5:2,11 7:12 13:21 27:24</p> <p>question 14:20 26:14 35:6 36:20 39:3</p> <p>questions 26:12 27:12 37:16 39:1</p> <p>quick 39:3</p> <p>quickly 5:7 33:10 34:25</p> <p>quite 6:4 10:22 11:8,24 15:21 17:10 28:13</p> </td></tr> <tr> <td colspan="4">r</td></tr> <tr> <td colspan="4"> <p>r 2:1 42:1</p> <p>railroad 10:10,18 10:24 12:21 20:20 23:19,25 24:10 25:13 30:21 31:21 34:21 41:3</p> <p>rain 24:22</p> <p>raise 3:11 5:10</p> <p>range 6:2,3 7:14 16:4 17:5,8,15,16</p> <p>rare 37:1</p> <p>ratio 5:5</p> <p>ratios 6:12</p> <p>reach 20:15 24:11</p> </td></tr>	q				<p>q3 4:24,25 5:25</p> <p>q4 6:4,5 7:1,24</p> <p>quarter 5:2,11 7:12 13:21 27:24</p> <p>question 14:20 26:14 35:6 36:20 39:3</p> <p>questions 26:12 27:12 37:16 39:1</p> <p>quick 39:3</p> <p>quickly 5:7 33:10 34:25</p> <p>quite 6:4 10:22 11:8,24 15:21 17:10 28:13</p>				r				<p>r 2:1 42:1</p> <p>railroad 10:10,18 10:24 12:21 20:20 23:19,25 24:10 25:13 30:21 31:21 34:21 41:3</p> <p>rain 24:22</p> <p>raise 3:11 5:10</p> <p>range 6:2,3 7:14 16:4 17:5,8,15,16</p> <p>rare 37:1</p> <p>ratio 5:5</p> <p>ratios 6:12</p> <p>reach 20:15 24:11</p>			
q																			
<p>q3 4:24,25 5:25</p> <p>q4 6:4,5 7:1,24</p> <p>quarter 5:2,11 7:12 13:21 27:24</p> <p>question 14:20 26:14 35:6 36:20 39:3</p> <p>questions 26:12 27:12 37:16 39:1</p> <p>quick 39:3</p> <p>quickly 5:7 33:10 34:25</p> <p>quite 6:4 10:22 11:8,24 15:21 17:10 28:13</p>																			
r																			
<p>r 2:1 42:1</p> <p>railroad 10:10,18 10:24 12:21 20:20 23:19,25 24:10 25:13 30:21 31:21 34:21 41:3</p> <p>rain 24:22</p> <p>raise 3:11 5:10</p> <p>range 6:2,3 7:14 16:4 17:5,8,15,16</p> <p>rare 37:1</p> <p>ratio 5:5</p> <p>ratios 6:12</p> <p>reach 20:15 24:11</p>																			

reached 12:8 reaching 9:20 12:3 react 27:25 read 26:10 29:21 29:23,24 30:7 readers 34:17 35:11 reading 30:3 ready 26:11 real 17:7 27:8 33:10 34:25 realigned 33:6 realistically 24:19 reality 28:4 really 6:21 9:6 10:18 13:4,18 14:15,21,21 16:5 16:12 18:7,17 20:7 26:6 27:6,13 32:10 33:24 35:6 35:22 36:8 rear 20:9 reason 12:6 36:19 36:21 37:8 rebuild 37:13 receive 39:4 receiving 35:7 recollection 28:15 recommendations 20:19 record 3:9 redesign 32:25 33:11,18 redesigned 23:21 25:2 redesigns 33:21 refrigerator 16:13 regarding 39:7 regardless 5:10 reinstated 34:19	related 42:9 relationship 38:21 relatively 5:18 6:16 reliable 33:7 relocate 22:23,24 removal 21:10 rented 23:3 renting 20:5 23:3 replacement 35:12 report 4:25 reporter 42:5 representatives 9:21 requests 6:23 requirements 39:22 reservations 6:9 respect 21:19 respond 12:9 responsibilities 38:10 responsibility 22:21 restaurant 19:12 return 10:8,12,17 11:6 30:10 36:17 returned 11:1 revenue 40:25 revitalization 19:2 rfp 27:1 richards 2:2 ride 6:23 24:9 34:2 riders 16:6 26:5 33:20 39:5 ridership 4:11,20 10:4 36:25 37:2 37:13 40:18,21 right 6:15 9:20 13:17 15:17 17:12 17:21 19:2,24	20:10 22:17 23:17 32:18 33:23 35:3 35:24 37:4 39:14 road 19:6,17 21:9 21:12 22:6 23:7 25:10 roadway 21:11 role 22:3 roll 17:25 35:17 roof 18:9 room 19:8 23:2 30:18 38:18 roosevelt 13:1 18:24 19:16 30:11 30:16,18 rosa 18:5,23 rosario 2:4 3:13 3:15 rotation 14:19 round 41:19 route 5:9 7:25 13:19 14:1 33:5 39:23 routes 29:13 33:2 33:23 34:5 routing 37:4 run 13:15 15:18 34:14 running 5:13 15:2 30:23 runs 31:3 rust 18:9	satisfied 36:13 saturday 11:5 saved 38:3 savings 37:20,22 saying 19:16 21:23 21:24 23:1 24:15 38:6 says 34:3,16,19,22 37:3 schedule 27:17 28:2,4,6,7 schedules 11:11 scheduling 27:25 school 12:5,11 26:15 schools 12:4,24 screen 3:22 4:1 8:10 screens 18:11 season 40:13 second 8:14 11:25 41:12,13 see 3:25 4:13 5:2 10:1,15 12:12 13:13 19:8,9 20:16,21 21:15 24:23 25:22 27:16 33:24 38:22 seeing 10:23 seen 10:6 11:4 33:8 38:23 40:20 send 11:25 26:25 separate 32:24 september 8:22 serve 32:4 serves 13:5 service 4:11,14,20 4:23 7:16 8:24 9:17,18 10:1,17 11:6,7,8,9 13:8,16 13:23,24 14:2,16
		s	
		s 2:1 safe 19:6 safer 19:18 20:13 safety 5:4 13:3 23:6 40:16 sanitation 22:2 santa 12:18	

15:24 16:2,2 17:4 17:17,19 18:2,19 21:4,20,24 29:11 30:10,15,23,24 31:7,18,23 32:5,6 32:8,8 33:7,16 36:13,15,16,17 39:21,23 40:15 services 30:9 37:1 session 38:17 sharon 2:8 sheldon 2:6 3:5 shelly 40:8 shifted 19:11 shock 33:20 short 6:16 shorthand 42:4 shout 3:12 show 7:24 shows 9:16 38:10 shrenkel 2:6 3:2,5 3:16,18,21,25 4:3 4:7 26:9 28:12 29:6 30:6 37:14 37:18 40:1,6,9 41:5,15 shut 30:21 side 27:25 signature 42:14 significant 28:16 simply 28:19 40:21 single 9:12 sir 14:10 sits 18:3 situation 20:13 30:22 35:2 39:20 40:3 six 14:22 size 8:8 16:12,12 31:8	slide 8:15 slides 8:9 slight 9:17 10:2 31:7 slow 23:9 small 8:9 39:7 smart 35:12 smarter 37:11 snow 21:10,14 22:8 24:11,22 25:16 snowfall 19:7 22:7 snows 21:10 social 38:9 solution 19:10 25:7 solutions 12:14 25:23 32:17,21 somebody's 19:18 somewhat 29:25 sorry 8:7 34:7 sort 30:2 sounds 41:8 space 23:3 span 32:6 speak 19:23 21:13 29:17 speaking 32:3 special 16:10,11 specifically 36:14 specs 15:2 speed 23:9 spend 29:7,19 spoke 22:11,12 stable 10:1 36:22 staff 26:18 staffed 6:13 26:18 26:19 staffing 6:8,11 26:20	standalone 15:12 standing 30:18 start 4:24 7:15 9:15 19:19 34:25 started 7:2 17:2 23:4 starting 15:4 state 9:10,21 14:24 22:6,6 42:5 station 15:12 16:18,19 19:1 21:4,9 22:15 23:19,24,25 24:3,6 24:17 34:21 stationed 17:23 stations 15:6,15,19 16:3 status 26:21 34:16 stepped 3:14 29:12 stoa 9:11 27:20,23 28:2 stop 31:21 32:13 stopped 11:14 stops 7:18 21:13 31:17 storing 20:8 strive 38:20 strong 5:15 11:8 stronger 7:2 37:10 strongly 34:13 students 10:20 subject 38:15 subway 24:10 success 37:10 suggestion 8:12 summer 20:1 sunday 11:5 supervisor's 35:20 supervisors 34:23 36:7	supplier 16:14 suppliers 17:1 supply 15:17 supportive 9:23 supposed 19:22 sure 11:11 12:12 13:9 17:14 18:1 22:9 41:4 surges 6:23 suspect 7:24 system 33:11,18 33:19,21
			t
			t 42:1,1 take 21:21 24:11 24:15,17 37:17 taken 18:8 33:11 33:13 takes 25:15 talk 4:18 7:7 13:3 20:24 22:18 talked 40:3 talking 15:1 19:19 20:3 23:1 32:14 40:17 tasked 14:25 taxpayers 38:7 team 12:15 15:1 38:20 technology 15:23 16:6 38:8 tell 25:6 tells 25:4 ten 11:19 tend 7:16,17 terrazzo 18:11 thank 3:18 4:3,7 4:12 14:20 41:15 41:21 thing 6:14 19:18 20:7 22:14

things 5:3 13:25 16:23 20:1 27:12 27:25 29:4,13 33:14 37:4,25 think 3:7 12:19 15:16 19:13 20:23 28:10,12 29:7,15 29:18,18 30:10,12 30:14,22 37:21 38:4,10,21,23 40:5 41:5 thinking 23:15 24:17 28:25 third 5:11 14:5 41:14,16 thought 18:21 21:19 41:8 thoughts 20:4 40:2 three 32:24 throat 8:5 thursday 1:3 tiles 18:12 time 3:1 5:3,8,9,11 5:13,14,18,22 6:16 6:19,25 7:10,25 18:23 22:11,17 25:8 27:24 29:7 29:19 37:5 41:23 timeline 8:20 9:19 35:14 times 8:16 today 3:8 4:18 27:7 ton 30:4 tony 2:4 3:13 top 7:14,19 13:13 36:9 tow 17:20 town 19:4 22:2,5 22:12 23:1 24:5 31:11	track 28:3 tradition 13:2 traffic 6:1 13:4 32:19 34:23 35:21 35:22 36:4,8 train 19:1 21:4,9 21:22 22:15 23:24 23:25 24:3,17 training 17:2 transcript 42:7 transdev 34:12 transit 3:3 6:9 12:25 18:5,7 19:16 36:1 39:12 39:13 transportation 12:14 24:16 37:19 38:11,14 40:25 transported 10:20 17:24,25 transporting 11:2 travel 11:5,12 25:16 traveling 24:24 tremendous 29:16 38:24,24 tremendously 13:25 trickling 13:20 tries 41:6 trip 5:20 7:9 trips 7:16 26:20 trovaccia 36:11 truck 12:1 17:24 true 39:20,22 42:7 try 27:16 trying 22:19 tune 37:22 tuning 39:21 turn 17:10	turnpike 36:6 turns 35:25 tweaks 9:1 two 10:24 15:4,15 16:19 24:8,21 26:2 33:2 34:7 35:5 39:19 u ubs 31:18 32:3 34:23 35:21,22 36:3 unacceptable 6:12 underserved 31:1 understand 9:22 16:3 22:9,19 24:14 unfortunately 9:13 27:9,22 28:4 40:19 unit 16:11,12 united 34:11 units 16:9 unmute 3:24 update 10:4 updates 4:11,11 4:20,21 13:8,9 18:23 upgrade 18:16 upgrading 18:6 ups 7:18 40:20 uptick 5:25 use 20:12 26:18 usually 31:4 v vacant 20:6 23:17 valid 23:14 variations 33:5 vehicle 15:2,2 17:19 18:2 25:14	vehicles 7:6 13:11 13:16,19,23,24 14:25 15:14,18,25 16:17,19 17:4 25:15 26:3 velez 42:4,15 versus 37:21 viewing 37:18 village 31:11 virtual 27:7 vis 37:21,21 voice 8:6 volatility 29:3 vote 27:18 w wait 28:5 walk 23:24 24:2,7 24:11 27:10 walking 24:21 26:2 wall 18:12 want 4:24 6:21 7:20,23 8:15,19 12:12 13:9 14:17 24:12 25:24 26:5 26:13 35:10 40:10 wanted 10:4 warped 39:15 washington 39:16 watched 38:7 watching 40:12 water 15:8 way 11:4,12 18:20 29:4 42:11 we've 8:16 12:16 13:22 32:2 40:20 weather 10:14 week 10:14,14 40:23 weekdays 31:4
--	---	--	---

weekend 11:7	13:21 14:15 18:15
weekends 30:19	27:20 28:8 31:8
30:24	33:14,16 34:12
welcome 3:2	37:20,23 38:3
went 12:10,25	39:18,18 40:14
west 12:5 30:16,18	years 9:25 12:17
westchester 10:11	12:20 19:22 23:21
10:11 35:15 41:7	25:2,9 27:2 35:5
wheels 17:22	36:23 37:19 38:25
wide 32:25	39:10,14
winds 29:1	yesterday 12:15
winter 10:15	york 9:10 10:9
wish 40:10,12	33:1 42:6
wondering 27:17	yuki 31:16
wood 10:2	z
words 23:16 24:12	zero 8:1
work 16:13 18:10	zoom 1:5
24:16 25:20,20	
32:9,12 38:20	
working 9:20	
16:20,24 31:25	
32:16,19,20 35:13	
35:16 40:23	
works 8:21	
world 28:22	
worse 30:19,22	
worthwhile 23:5	
would've 27:6,8	
writes 30:9 31:11	
31:11,16 34:11	
36:12	
wrong 21:24,24	
28:24 34:3	
x	
xe40 31:12	
y	
yeah 19:21 29:24	
39:12	
year 4:15,16 5:10	
9:13,16 11:18,23	