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Council Members, Advocacy Groups, Labor & Business Leaders Urge Mayor de Blasio to Address NYC's Mounting Infrastructure Needs & Identify New Ways of Funding Critical Capital Projects

Mayor's 10-Year Capital Plan is an Important Step Forward, but Greater Investment is Needed

At a press conference today on the steps of City Hall, a diverse group of City Council Members and civic leaders—including transportation advocates, parks advocates, environmental advocates, business leaders, labor leaders and policy experts—called on Mayor de Blasio to address the city's mounting infrastructure needs and develop new mechanisms for funding infrastructure projects. The press conference, which was held on the same day as a City Council Finance Committee hearing on the de Blasio administration's 10-Year Capital Strategy, shined a light on the considerable infrastructure needs facing New York City, from aging water mains and deficient bridges to outdated subway signals and run down school buildings.

The council members and civic leaders participating in the press conference applauded Mayor de Blasio for putting forth an ambitious 10-year capital strategy that includes a significant investment in schools, housing, bridges and other essential needs. But they urged him to go further at a time when so much of the city's critical infrastructure is aging and in need of repair, population increases are putting new strains on much of the core infrastructure, and the federal government appears unwilling to provide the level of infrastructure funding that is so needed. The participants called on the mayor to identify and embrace new capital funding options.

Last spring, the Center for an Urban Future published a report which documented that a significant portion of New York City's core infrastructure is more than 50 years old and estimated that \$47 billion is needed over the next four to five years simply to bring the city's aging infrastructure to a state of good repair.

Council Member Brad Lander: "NYC's public infrastructure – our subways & schools, water & power lines, parks & libraries, roads & bridges, public housing & hospitals – is quite literally the foundation on which the common lives of New Yorkers are built. Mayor de Blasio deserves credit for a thoughtful and ambitious Ten Year Capital Plan plan to maintain and modernize that infrastructure (and also for calling on Washington DC to do its part). But quite frankly, even more is needed. With gridlock in DC, we must explore creative options for New York City to afford the additional infrastructure investments we so desperately need: pay-as-you-go capital, congestion pricing, an infrastructure bank. We must improve our capacity to manage infrastructure projects better. And we should build upon participatory budgeting and workforce linkage programs to get more New Yorkers invested for the long term efforts that a sustainable future for NYC demands."

Council Member Dan Garodnick: "We ignore our aging infrastructure at our peril. The economic health of the City will reflect how we handle this challenge, which is why we need to commit to funding infrastructure at a more meaningful level."

Council Member Mark Levine: “In order to offer New Yorkers safe, healthy, and accessible park and playground facilities, we need capital investments to support their maintenance and growth. While the Mayor’s capital plan provides investment in some key areas, capital spending for parks is projected to fall by 45 percent over the next decade. If we are to close the parks equity gap, more capital funds will be needed to meet the challenge, particularly in smaller neighborhood parks. I look forward to working with the Mayor, colleagues and advocates to identify additional capital improvements that will give more New Yorkers access to truly great public spaces.”

Henry Garrido, Executive Director of District Council 37: “A key to our success in the future – and an antidote to the growing challenge of economic inequality – is properly addressing our city’s crumbling infrastructure. This includes an investment in our city’s public libraries, which are the heart of our communities. But budget cuts since the Great Recession have reduced services and hours, and desperately-needed infrastructure work was set aside. The city has recovered from the economic crisis. Surely the Mayor and the City Council can agree on the value of providing the resources libraries need to serve the 37 million visitors who come every year.”

Richard T. Anderson, President, New York Building Congress: “Today’s hearing should signal the beginning, not the end, of a focused effort to address the City’s extensive infrastructure needs. Such an effort will require leadership from City Hall and a realization that the funding streams and procurement practices of the past will not be enough. The Building Congress stands at the ready to assist in this effort.”

Eric A. Goldstein, New York City Environment director at the Natural Resources Defense Council: “More than 6,000 miles of drinking water aqueducts, tunnels and pipes; 232 route miles of subways; and over 2,000 bridges and tunnels -- these are among New York City’s most valuable lifelines. We urge Mayor de Blasio to work with the City Council and New York State officials to fund investments in this infrastructure, to the benefit of all city residents.”

Tupper Thomas, executive director of New Yorkers for Parks: “New York keeps growing, and so do its open space needs. We call on the mayor and City Council to find ways to invest in parks and open spaces as the essential public services that they are.”

Felice Farber, Director of External Affairs for the General Contractors Association of New York: “The City’s Ten Year Capital Strategy is a positive step towards fixing our aging infrastructure, reducing the city’s carbon footprint and continuing state-of-good-repair projects throughout all five boroughs. While our capital needs may be far greater than the administration’s increase, we appreciate the attention that our infrastructure was given as the City charts our course for the next ten years.”

Christopher Jones, Vice President for Research at Regional Plan Association: “From London to Shanghai, our global peers are investing far more in transit, airports, housing and other critical infrastructure than New York. If we fail to maintain and modernize the systems that

make the city work, we put all of our goals at risk, from building more affordable housing to expanding jobs and economic opportunity.”

Joe Sitt, Chairman and Founder of the Global Gateway Alliance: “Too many critical infrastructure improvement projects in our region have wound up on the back burner, and New York City airports are no exception. As major economic engines, it is time to invest in the necessary upgrades that will not only bring our airports into the 21st century, but also pave the way for the sustained economic growth that will secure New York's status as leading global city.”

John Raskin, Executive Director of the Riders Alliance: “For New York to be a city of economic opportunity, people need to be able to rely on mass transit to get to work, to school, and to travel around the region. There are more people on the subway than we've seen in generations, but service quality has started to deteriorate. Delays are up, equipment is falling apart, and the entire city is starting to suffer the consequences. It's time for the city, state and federal governments to make transit investment a priority, before our subways start to resemble the 'bad old days' of the 1970s and 80s.”

Alec Slatky, Legislative and Community Relations Representative for AAA: “Statistics confirm what New York City drivers have long intuitively known: over the past fifteen years, street conditions have plummeted. Since FY99, the percentage of streets in fair or poor condition has doubled and the City's pothole burden has quadrupled. In 2014, AAA serviced flat tire calls on City streets once every ten minutes. This decline is not inevitable. We can't change the freeze-thaw cycle, but we can change the cycle of underinvestment in the road network that drives our City's economy. AAA applauds the Mayor and the Council for proposing to increase road resurfacing in FY16 and urges them to make this a decade-long commitment.”

Dr. F.H. “Bud” Griffis, Chairman of the Department of Civil Engineering at Poly-NYU & Director, American Society of Civil Engineers: “The American Society of Civil Engineers has given the nation’s infrastructure a poor D+ grade point average due to the current conditions of our infrastructure and the lack of focus on fixing it. Complacency is one of infrastructure’s great challenges, and we should not stand for it. Every person in New York City knows that infrastructure makes our lives work from the subway to the Brooklyn bridge to running water and electricity. It’s a huge part of our lives every day and so we absolutely must work to maintain it. We cannot, will not, and should not settle for ignored, slow, broken, or unsafe infrastructure in New York City.”

Jonathan Bowles, Executive Director, Center for an Urban Future: “Mayor de Blasio deserves credit for his thoughtful and far-reaching 10-Year Capital Plan. But at a time when too much of the city’s essential infrastructure remains stuck in the 20th Century and little help is coming from Washington, additional resources and new ideas are needed to bring the city’s critical infrastructure into a state of good repair. Unless the right investments are made in the years ahead, the city’s economic competitiveness and quality of life will be dealt a serious blow.”