



“Five Year Transportation Plan” TESTIMONY New York City Council, Transportation Committee/June 12 ,2019

Good morning, Chair Rodriguez and esteemed council members. I am Christine Berthet, co-founder of CHEKPEDS, a 15-year old advocacy coalition for pedestrian safety.

We applaud the creation of a Five-Year Transportation Plan for New York City. We want WALKING to be a priority in this Master Plan.

Everyone walks in New York: 11.4 million of us walk every day: from parking lots to stores, to and from bus and subway stops, to home or to work. The 1.1 million commuters arriving at the bus terminal, at Grand Central and Penn Station WALK. 60 million tourists visit New York annually and they WALK. And we pay the highest price for that privilege: since 2014, 663 crash fatalities involved pedestrians - 50% of the total - and 55,000 pedestrians were injured in our fair City. Please give that your attention.

Yet in Manhattan, our walking infrastructure has been overlooked: sidewalks are crowded to the point of overflowing into traffic at great risk to walkers. There are at least five different laws for the minimum width of the pedestrian right of way, all the way from 9’6” to 3’. And while it takes two days to fill a pothole it takes six months (!) to repair dangerous sidewalk conditions. People with disabilities have to sue the City to obtain compliance with federal laws.

It is time to re-envision our sidewalks as “Walk Lanes” and to address the pressing needs of their users - all of us - in this master plan.

CHEKPEDS recommends that an annual city-wide audit be performed for 500 miles of Walk Lanes - out of a network of 12,700 miles. The audit must address the capacity of Walk Lanes compared to the volume of users, the level of protection provided on the sidewalk and the crosswalks and the quality of pavements. It would address ADA rules.

To support Vision Zero, prioritize transportation hubs and high crash areas. DOT should then perform upgrades to create “Protected Walk Lanes”: remove obstacles and widen sidewalks, protect walkers from vehicles (i.e. raised sidewalks and islands, split phases, split LPIs, stronger lighting, high visibility crossings) and REPAIR the pavement! 200 miles should be upgraded each year, and no less.

DOT MUST establish standards for a minimum Walk Lane width - this is, after all, the pedestrian right-of-way. And DOT must consider institutional changes for the sound maintenance and enforcement of the Walk Lanes.

And DOT should publish an annual report of completed projects with changes implemented and projects planned for the following year.

Thank you.