

Committee on Public Safety
February 24, 2021

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

Remote location using Microsoft® Teams
Wednesday, February 24, 2021
10:00 a.m

PRESENT:

COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR., CHAIR
COUNCILWOMAN KENDRA BROOKS
COUNCILWOMAN JAMIE GAUTHIER
COUNCILMAN DEREK S. GREEN
COUNCILWOMAN HELEN GYM
COUNCILMAN ISAIAH THOMAS

RESOLUTION: 200487

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2 COUNCILMAN JONES: Good
3 morning, everyone. This is the public
4 hearing of the Committee on Public
5 Safety regarding Resolution No. 200487.
6 And before we begin, I would like to
7 recognize Ms. Samantha Williams,
8 Esquire, to read a required statement.

9 THE CLERK: Thank you,
10 Mr. Chairman. I understand that state
11 law currently requires that the
12 following announcement be made at the
13 beginning of every remote public
14 hearings as follows: Due to the current
15 health crisis, City Council Committees
16 are meeting remotely. We are using
17 Microsoft Teams to make this remote
18 hearing possible.

19 Instructions for how the public
20 can view and offer public testimony at
21 public hearings of Council Committees
22 are included in the public hearing
23 notices that are published in the Daily
24 News, Intelligencer and Legal
25 Intelligencer prior to the hearing and

1 can also be found on PHLCouncil.

2 Everyone who has been invited
3 to the meeting to testify should be
4 aware that this public hearing is being
5 recorded. And because this hearing is
6 being recorded, participants and viewers
7 have no reasonable expectation of
8 privacy. By continuing to be in the
9 meeting, you are consenting to be being
10 recorded.

11 Additionally, prior to
12 Councilman Jones recognizing Members for
13 questions or comments they may have for
14 witnesses, I will note for the record at
15 this time that we will use the chat
16 feature available in Microsoft Teams to
17 allow Members to signify that they wish
18 to be recognized. In order to comply
19 with the Sunshine Act, the chat feature
20 must only be used for this purpose.

21 Thank you.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
23 Ms. Williams. And will you please call
24 the roll. And will those Members in
25 attendance please say a few words and

1 say present so that your image may
2 appear on the screen.

3 THE CLERK: Councilmember
4 Thomas.

5 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Good
6 morning, colleagues. Good morning,
7 Mr. Chairman. I'm present.

8 THE CLERK: Councilmember
9 Green.

10 COUNCILMAN GREEN: I am
11 present. Looking forward to today's
12 conversation.

13 THE CLERK: Councilmember
14 Gauthier.

15 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Good
16 morning, Mr. Chair. Good morning,
17 Samantha. Good morning, colleagues.
18 Present.

19 THE CLERK: Councilmember Gym.

20 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Good
21 morning, Council Chair. And good
22 morning, colleagues. Look forward to
23 this important conversation.

24 THE CLERK: Councilmember
25 Brooks.

1 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Good
2 morning, colleagues. Good morning. I'm
3 present.

4 THE CLERK: Vice-Chairman
5 Johnson.

6 (No response.)

7 THE CLERK: And, Chairman
8 Jones.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: I am present
10 and thank you, and good morning to all
11 Members and the viewing audience. I
12 want to thank you for being on the
13 Committee. A quorum is present and we
14 will begin the hearing.

15 Ms. Williams, will you please
16 read the title of the resolution.

17 THE CLERK: Resolution No.
18 200487, a resolution authorizing the
19 Committee on Public Safety to hold
20 hearings on the scourge of vehicular
21 hit-and-run incidents in Philadelphia to
22 give voice to victims and their families
23 and seek solutions to reduce and
24 eliminate this problem from our City.

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.

1 Before we begin testimony, I want to
2 recognize the author of this resolution,
3 Member Thomas, to kick us off and talk
4 about the purpose of this important
5 resolution.

6 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Good
7 morning, Mr. Chair. And good morning to
8 everybody that is a part of this
9 conversation today. I just want to say
10 first and foremost, thank you to
11 Councilmember Jones as well as the other
12 members of Council, including my staff
13 as well as his staff for putting
14 together this hearing today to what we
15 feel like is an important conversation
16 about an issue that's not getting enough
17 attention.

18 Currently right now in the City
19 of Philadelphia, and unfortunately, we
20 have a number of different issues that
21 we face on a consistent basis, which is
22 led by this pandemic, this unfortunate
23 coronavirus crisis. But as a Council
24 body we talk all the time about the
25 different concerns that we have across

1 our City. And one of the issues that is
2 just not getting the attention that we
3 know it deserves is this issue of
4 hit-and-runs, specifically hit-and-runs
5 that lead to a fatality.

6 So today, we're hoping to have
7 a robust conversation. I'm glad that I
8 have so many of my colleagues,
9 specifically District Councilmembers on
10 the call because we know that this
11 conversation is going to have something
12 to do with infrastructure and addressing
13 infrastructure needs in our City.

14 Right now in the City of
15 Philadelphia, 50 percent of our City
16 essentially commute every single day
17 compared to other large cities, that
18 number is extremely high and we're
19 talking about people that commute by
20 themselves, and that's a stat that
21 impacts traffic. We see 80 percent of
22 our car accidents here in the City of
23 Philadelphia happen only on 12 percent
24 of our actual roads. So while we
25 recognize it's a city-wide problem, but

1 we also understand that it's not a
2 problem that exists on every road or
3 every street here in the City of
4 Philadelphia. We recognize that some
5 places have a higher likelihood of there
6 being some level of incidents as it
7 relates to car accident. And again,
8 that's the point of having today's
9 conversation.

10 2020 was specifically a
11 disturbing year. If you think about it,
12 again the fact that the year was
13 highlighted by the unfortunate
14 coronavirus crisis and the fact that we
15 had to spend a lot of time home is
16 actually extremely alarming that we had
17 a 78 percent increase as it relates to
18 hit-and-runs, and hits-and-runs that
19 lead to a fatality.

20 We know that 1 in 4 car crashes
21 in the City of Philadelphia ended in a
22 hit-and-run and we've seen over 200
23 percent in accidents in certain sections
24 in certain Districts here in the City of
25 Philadelphia. And so, when we know that

1 we've seen more deaths in 2020 than what
2 we've seen in over a decade because of
3 car accidents, we know that there have
4 been a number of reports and concerns
5 from constituents across the City as it
6 relates to this issue.

7 I want to say thank you to
8 everybody for participating in today's
9 robust conversation and I look forward
10 to not just listening to the concerns,
11 but also discussing a possible solution
12 that we can implement to begin to
13 address this issue. So what's started
14 as a Streets and Services issue quickly
15 turned into a Public Safety issue, and
16 that's what brought us here today.

17 So thank you, Mr. Chairman.
18 And thank you for everybody
19 participating in today's conversation.

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: Member
21 Thomas, thank you for your insight,
22 foresight to bring this to Council's
23 attention, and more importantly, come up
24 with solutions to address this problem.

25 With that, Samantha Williams,

1 will you please read the names of the
2 first panel to testify on Resolution No.
3 200487.

4 THE CLERK: The first panel to
5 testify is Captain Mark Overwise,
6 Christopher Puchalsky and Lily Reynolds.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
8 very much.

9 THE CLERK: And, Chairman
10 Jones, I believe that Councilmember Gym
11 is requesting to make brief remarks.

12 COUNCILMAN JONES: Member Gym.

13 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Good
14 morning, everybody. It doesn't look
15 like my video is working so I apologize
16 for that. But I want to just thank the
17 sponsor of the resolution for this
18 important conversation, in particular
19 just wanted to note the importance of
20 this work, and we will be hearing from a
21 number of City agencies and others who
22 will be talking about this, but really
23 just appreciate Councilmember Thomas for
24 focusing in on this issue.

25 When we first came in, in

1 2016-2017, we had long talked about the
2 importance of focusing in on
3 hit-and-runs, particularly in the
4 immediate area within a quarter mile of
5 a school. We've been working on
6 problematic issues such as massive
7 numbers of vacancy in school crossing
8 guards and seeing accidents happen
9 during school hours at intersections
10 where you can see in some places five
11 different roads converging together in a
12 high-speed area and watching as middle
13 schoolers bring their kindergartener or
14 primary grade siblings along with them
15 to navigate those streets.

16 There's no question that the
17 City needs to invest both its thinking
18 and its capital into real investment
19 that address this issue. We have
20 already done a tremendous amount of work
21 through knowing what can be possible
22 through Vision Zero, partnerships with
23 some of the organizations that are going
24 to be speaking today, and most of all by
25 uplifting the voices of individuals and

1 families who themselves have been huge
2 advocates on taking some serious
3 solutions to it.

4 So I just want to thank the
5 Council sponsor. I want to thank this
6 Committee for really taking this issue
7 so seriously.

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
9 Member Gym.

10 Okay. Will the first
11 individuals to testify state your name
12 for the record and please begin your
13 testimony.

14 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: Good
15 morning. Mark Overwise. Good morning,
16 Chairman Jones and members of the
17 Philadelphia City Council on Committee
18 of Public Safety. My name is Mark
19 Overwise. I'm the Captain of the
20 Philadelphia Police Department. I've
21 been a police officer for 29 years. I'm
22 currently assigned as the Commanding
23 Officer of the Accident Investigation
24 District, the position that I've held
25 for the last three years.

1 I wish to thank Councilman
2 Thomas for inviting me here before you
3 today to testify about this important
4 serious. The Philadelphia Police
5 Department is the primary and most
6 essential resource to combat violent
7 crime and ensure public safety for all
8 Philadelphians and visitors of this
9 great City.

10 Every year an average of 58,000
11 traffic crashes report to the
12 Philadelphia Police Department. And
13 yearly, the Accident Investigation
14 District investigates about 2300 and we
15 also process about 3100 DUI arrests. As
16 the Councilman mentioned last year, we
17 experienced a 76 percent increase in
18 traffic deaths from 2019 to 2020.
19 That's compared with New York City, for
20 example, of a 3 percent increase that
21 they've experienced.

22 So with that in mind, please
23 consider the following that a motor
24 vehicle plays a dominant role in the
25 lives of most Americans. And most

1 Americans rely on transportation at some
2 point for some aspect of their lives.
3 It's also one of the most common modes
4 used by criminal actors who commit a
5 crime.

6 For 100 years, the Philadelphia
7 Police Department has carried the
8 responsibility of investigating motor
9 vehicle crashes as part of the larger
10 picture of overall public safety and
11 will continue to play a primary role in
12 investigating, analyzing reducing and
13 preventing crime and traffic collisions.
14 Over the last 20 years, the capacity of
15 AID has been reduced by one-fifth, while
16 the annual traffic fatality rates
17 maintain relatively stable. A desire
18 for streets to be safer from violent
19 crime and traffic injuries and deaths is
20 something that we all share. However,
21 the Police Department's ability to hold
22 drivers accountable is minuscule.

23 For example, AID can only
24 investigate about 4 percent of the total
25 reported crashes to the Police

1 Department. The reality is that AID
2 lacks the capacity to investigate and
3 follow up with the majority of the
4 reported crashes, and the result is
5 clearly visible. It's demonstrated by
6 the willingness of drivers to engage in
7 dangerous, aggressive, careless and
8 sometimes even reckless behaviors
9 throughout the narrow streets of our
10 neighborhoods, and then they leave the
11 scene of the crash because consequences
12 are (inaudible).

13 Today the risk of leaving the
14 scene of a crash is overshadowed by the
15 likelihood of getting away with it.
16 Just as important as the amount and
17 frequency of traffic collisions in our
18 City, is where they occur and what else
19 occurs in those same areas. At the end
20 of this presentation it should be clear
21 that traffic problems and crime problems
22 are linked by location and several other
23 factors that should decide how the City
24 responds.

25 I will share this slide

1 presentation with you. And for the sake
2 of time, I'll advance the couple of
3 slides because the first five slides
4 just describe how a crash is reported
5 from local police departments to
6 PennDOT. This here is a four-year
7 snapshot of how AID investigates crashes
8 and the amount that we investigate.

9 As I said, about 2300 per year
10 we investigate. And its average before
11 2020 was 95 fatal crashes per year.

12 COUNCILMAN JONES: Are you --
13 is there a slide?

14 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: It's not
15 sharing?

16 COUNCILMAN JONES: No.

17 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: I apologize
18 for that. I thought it was sharing
19 here. Can we see that?

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: Yes.

21 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: I apologize
22 for that.

23 COUNCILMAN JONES: That's quite
24 all right.

25 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: This is a

1 four-year snapshot of our
2 investigations --

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Captain,
4 Otherwise, I think we're still seeing
5 your Window Explorer, not the
6 presentation itself.

7 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: Can't see
8 any of that, huh?

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: I see maps,
10 but they're very small.

11 MR. MAYNARD: We see your
12 presentation slides, but in a view that
13 doesn't allow us to see them on screen
14 really. If you go into presentation
15 mode or something, that might help.

16 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: I was trying
17 to do -- I have it up on my screen. I
18 apologize.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Captain,
20 I wonder if you're sharing the wrong
21 screen. Do you have more than one
22 screen? Maybe if you switch the screens
23 that are being shared or drag the
24 presentation over to a different window.

25 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: How's this?

1 MR. MAYNARD: You'll still need
2 to share the screen. We don't see
3 anything right now.

4 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: I apologize.
5 Ms. Williams, if you can help me out if
6 you have a copy of this presentation. I
7 can tell you how to advance the slides.

8 THE CLERK: Okay. Let me try.

9 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: Because I
10 have it up here, but it's not...

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You all
12 have the presentation, so can somebody
13 show it?

14 MR. MAYNARD: That's what we're
15 trying to do now. We couldn't --

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.
17 There it is.

18 THE CLERK: Can everyone see
19 the slides?

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: Yes.

21 THE CLERK: Okay. Just let me
22 know what slide to advance to.

23 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: Can you
24 advance to Slide No. 8, please.

25 THE CLERK: This one?

1 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: Slide No. 8
2 should have the police symbol. So this
3 is just a flowchart of -- all right,
4 that's No. 6.

5 THE CLERK: Okay. Sorry. I
6 can't see the numbers from my vantage
7 point.

8 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: Okay. I
9 just want to acknowledge the work of the
10 Research Analysis Team for helping me
11 put these slides together.

12 You can advance to the next
13 slide, Slide No. 9. There we go. The
14 map on the right, that's a density map
15 that uses bolder colors to demonstrate
16 increases in density, higher density.

17 So 2020 had a lower year
18 overall compared to the five years for
19 hit-and-run crashes, but an increase in
20 the most serious crashes which were
21 crashes involving injuries or towing.

22 Next slide, please. Again, the
23 map on the right demonstrates where the
24 reported hit-and-run crashes occurred
25 and the area circled indicate higher

1 densities. And notice those areas
2 because you'll see them again across
3 several categories.

4 You can advance to the next
5 slide. These are hit-and-run density
6 maps through years 2016 through 2020,
7 and they're very indistinguishable from
8 one another because the patterns that
9 emerge year after year with hit-and-run
10 crashes.

11 Next slide. The next slide
12 shows the same five-year period showing
13 only the hit-and-run crashes with injury
14 or towing, the most severe ones, and
15 that's the one that's highlighted in the
16 table there. Again, notice where the
17 circles are and where the increased
18 densities are.

19 The next slide. Over 58,000
20 traffic crashes reported to the
21 Philadelphia Police Department as
22 Councilman Thomas has said, 1 in every 4
23 is a hit-and-run. Meaning, that that
24 underscores the need for enhanced
25 investigative capabilities so that the

1 Police Department can hold drivers more
2 accountable.

3 The next slide, Title 75 of the
4 Pennsylvania Consolidated statute is the
5 motor vehicle code, and these are the
6 sections that apply to hit-and-run
7 crashes. 3744 describes the duties of a
8 driver who was involved in a crash,
9 simply stated the duties are to remain
10 on location, report the crash and render
11 aid. And those last two can be
12 accomplished by calling 911.

13 Section 3743 relates to crashes
14 involving unoccupied vehicles or
15 property. Section 3745 relates to
16 crashes involving occupied vehicles or
17 property without injuries, and Section
18 3742 relates to crashes involving injury
19 or death. And on the next slide, we
20 have the penalties, and these are motor
21 vehicle code penalties.

22 So if the crash involves a
23 death, it's a felony in the second
24 degree. There's a minimum term of
25 imprisonment of not less than 3 years

1 and a mandatory minimum of five to 25
2 years. If the crash involves serious
3 bodily injury, then it's a felony in the
4 third degree. Imprisonment not less
5 than 90 days and a minimum of a fine of
6 \$1,000. Otherwise, a violation of this
7 section is a misdemeanor in the first
8 degree.

9 For crashes that involve damage
10 to occupied vehicles or property, it's a
11 misdemeanor in the third degree
12 punishable by a fine of \$2500 or
13 imprisonment for not more than 1 year or
14 both. And if a crash is involving
15 damage to unattended vehicle or property
16 is a summary offense or a traffic ticket
17 and that's a \$300 fine or imprisonment
18 not more than 90 days or both.

19 You can advance to the next
20 slide. Crime and traffic patterns are
21 very similar in Philadelphia. For
22 example, Philadelphia's homicide rate
23 and violent crime rates increased in
24 2020 and the fatal traffic crash rates
25 increased as well. This graph compares

1 to fatalities investigated by AID from
2 2019 to 2020.

3 Notice the percentage of
4 hit-and-run fatalities, how they
5 increased from 2019 to 2020. That's a
6 211 percent increase in hit-and-run
7 fatalities. Somehow we managed to
8 increase our solvability rate, but that
9 rate is still low.

10 The next slide, please. The
11 maps on this slide depict violent crime
12 and traffic crashes compared to one
13 another for the first three-quarters of
14 2019 and for 2020. Across the top is
15 2019 and you'll notice that the density
16 of violent crimes and the density of
17 crashes with injuries are very similar
18 on both years. Again, on the right side
19 it's shooting victims. Again, the same
20 neighborhoods are affected by crime and
21 crashes and this pattern is predictable.

22 The next slide, please. This
23 table was used to create the graph on
24 the previous slide. You'll notice that
25 on the Districts that were highlighted

1 all had increases in both crashes with
2 injuries, shooting victims and violent
3 crimes, except for a few, the next
4 slide. And those Districts only saw
5 minor decreases in the violent crime
6 category.

7 So the next slide uses maps
8 that show bolder colors that demonstrate
9 increased density and there are four
10 categories here. However, when you look
11 at the color where the densities are
12 concentrated, the maps you are getting,
13 almost undistinguishable from one
14 another.

15 The next slide reveals the
16 categories for you, telling you that
17 from left to right they are traffic
18 crashes, minority population, hit-and-
19 run crashes and violent crime. It's
20 clear that the same neighborhoods that
21 experience violent crime and have severe
22 traffic safety problem are the same areas
23 where minority residents are
24 concentrated. And using this data and
25 other data, a plan or a strategy can be

1 developed to address both problems
2 simultaneously.

3 The next slide is one example.

4 It is the data-driven approaches to
5 crime and traffic safety policing model.

6 This model was piloted here in 2012.

7 And in 2012, we saw a 38 percent

8 decrease in crime and a 15 percent

9 decrease in traffic crashes in the areas

10 targeted for the pilot, and I think

11 those are results that we would all love

12 to see today. This is a model that's

13 based on statistical data. It's not

14 based on traditional people-based police

15 models.

16 The next slide, please. With

17 respect to hit-and-run crashes, there

18 are a few more items that are worth

19 mentioning. According to the AAA

20 Foundation for Traffic Safety, their

21 research, drivers involved in hit-and-

22 run fatalities are more likely to be

23 young males and have a history of prior

24 DUI offenses and license suspension.

25 They tend to drive older model cars,

1 suggesting they have a lower
2 socioeconomic status, and they also
3 almost always have a positive blood
4 alcohol content at the time of the
5 arrest.

6 The next slide. In order to
7 countermeasure this, the Accident
8 Investigation conducts several DUI
9 enforcement activities throughout the
10 year, and these are funded by the
11 National Highway Traffic and Safety
12 Administration administered by PennDot.

13 The next slide has other
14 hit-and-run countermeasures. Kevin's
15 Law was signed by Governor Corbett in
16 2014, which increased the mandatory
17 minimum sentence from one year to three
18 year for leaving the scene of a crash
19 and a fatality. This also closed a
20 loophole which gave drivers who were
21 intoxicated incentive to leave the
22 crash.

23 Senator Anthony Williams last
24 year introduced Senate Bill 54, which
25 would require investigating law

1 enforcement agencies to alert the
2 vehicle repair facilities in
3 Pennsylvania via a system developed by
4 PennDot and said Bill 55 expands the
5 current Amber Alert system to include
6 hit-and-run advisories which are also
7 known as Jay Alerts.

8 The next slide, please.

9 Enhanced investigative capabilities for
10 the Accident Investigation District
11 requires more resources in the way of
12 staff and equipment. I propose to
13 increasing the staff of AID from the
14 current 36 officers and supervisors to
15 53 officers and supervisors, that the
16 Unit can divide the investigative tasks
17 and assign special investigators to the
18 most serious crashes. The other
19 investigators can investigate the less
20 serious crashes and handle the DUI
21 offenses. This increase would be equal
22 to eight more than what we had in 2000,
23 and that's the table on the far left,
24 our distribution of 2000. On the right
25 is our actual distribution in black and

1 the proposed distribution in blue.

2 AID would also benefit and
3 perform more efficiently with
4 improvements in technology. Forensic
5 mapping and enhanced response equipment
6 are some of the examples that we're
7 exploring to acquire via funding from
8 grant sources. Next slide, we use many
9 resources to make decisions about
10 deployment. One thing that we don't
11 have in this category is human research.
12 The human element is unexplored. After
13 all, we're talking about human behavior
14 here when somebody decides to leave a
15 crash. I think we can benefit from
16 partnering with a local university to
17 explore that and find measures to
18 mitigate that behavior, the last slide.

19 Again, I am deeply grateful for
20 the opportunity to participate with you
21 today in this hearing to address a very
22 serious issue of hit-and-run crashes in
23 Philadelphia. And I hope that the
24 information provided to you today will
25 emphasize that hit-and-run crashes are

1 only a small part of a much larger
2 problem that requires a sophisticated
3 but achievable solution. I thank you
4 for this opportunity.

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
6 for your testimony.

7 If it's okay with the
8 Committee, I don't think we should
9 continue to the next person to testify.
10 There was a lot of information given.
11 If it's okay, maybe we can kind of do a
12 Q&A now. Is that all right with the
13 rest of the Committee?

14 (No response.)

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: Hearing no
16 opposition, I assume it's okay.

17 You gave us a lot and some
18 stats jumped out at me. What percentage
19 of hit-and-runs or crashes that are
20 serious are the result of someone
21 fleeing the scene of a crime or in a
22 carjacking?

23 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: I'm sorry,
24 Councilman. I don't have that
25 information. That is an interesting

1 subject. I don't know how easy it will
2 be to obtain that information,
3 especially when you consider
4 leaving-the-scene crashes are very
5 difficult to solve to begin with.

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: So what
7 percentage of fleeing-the-scene crashes
8 have we solved? You gave me a lot of
9 information.

10 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: Okay. So 28
11 percent of the total reported crashes
12 are leaving the scene, which means 1 in
13 every 4 crashes regardless of the
14 severity are leaving-the-scene crashes
15 in Philadelphia.

16 For hit-and-run fatalities, we
17 had 9 in 2019. We had 28 in 2020.
18 That's a 211 percent increase. That's
19 for the fatalities.

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: All right.
21 Member Thomas, would you like to pursue
22 questions?

23 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Yes. Thank
24 you, Mr. Chair.

25 And thank you Sergeant Ov --

1 Sergeant, right?

2 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: Captain.

3 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: I'm sorry.

4 Captain Overwise, for being here today

5 and being a part of this conversation.

6 Just a few questions to get your opinion

7 on some things and to kind of maybe do a

8 deeper dive.

9 In the midst of the

10 presentation, there was some parallels

11 drawn between socioeconomic status, gun

12 violence and some of the car accidents

13 that we've seen. I'm wondering

14 considering that 1 in 4 are hit-and-runs

15 and we're not doing a good job solving a

16 lot of the crimes that we face, why do

17 we feel like socioeconomic status

18 actually plays a role in this, again

19 when, number one, we're not solving a

20 lot, number two, a lot aren't being

21 reported as well too. So we know that

22 there's an issue as far as reporting

23 hit-and-runs, but we also know that

24 there's an issue as far as solving them.

25 So I'm wondering what that

1 parallel has to do with some of the
2 information that was presented today?
3 Because like Councilman Jones said, it
4 was a lot. I think it was --

5 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: So that
6 particular piece that I gave you was
7 from the AAA research. Let me get the
8 title for you. The AAA Foundation on
9 Traffic Safety conducted research
10 several years ago and that is one of the
11 things that they found, is that the
12 driver who is likely to leave the scene
13 of a fatal crash, it involves a young
14 male who is in a lower socioeconomic
15 status who drove an older-model vehicle
16 and tends to have a blood alcohol
17 content at the time of the crash.
18 Again, that's not my research. I
19 grabbed that just to demonstrate that's
20 probably one of the things that we
21 should target for trying to mitigate.

22 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: No. Thank
23 you, Captain. I appreciate that. But
24 it's important for us to put information
25 on the record and that's something that

1 jumped out to me, so I just want to go
2 ahead and push back on that narrative
3 first, because we do have a lot of
4 inconclusive information that we can all
5 agree that's out there as we look to
6 study this issue.

7 You said that we had 28
8 fatalities last year, which again is
9 unfortunate, and I can only imagine what
10 it means to be on the scenes and talk to
11 those parents and other folks involved
12 in the losses. How many of those 28
13 fatalities led to an actual arrest of a
14 suspect?

15 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: The 28
16 hit-and-run fatalities that's been
17 solved not actually led to an arrest yet
18 because for some of them we are waiting
19 for arrest warrants, but it was 36
20 percent, if I have it correctly.

21 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: I'm
22 confused. So 36 percent of the 28 have
23 been solved or 28 have been solved which
24 is 36 percent of the total amount? I'm
25 a little confused. I'm sorry.

1 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: The total
2 hit-and-run fatalities, 28 of them -- so
3 there's 28 total hit-and-run fatalities.
4 I confused myself there. We solved 36
5 percent of them.

6 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: 36 percent
7 of the 28, okay. That's what I'm
8 asking.

9 I do have other questions,
10 Mr. Chair. Can I just -- I see other
11 colleagues are queued up, because I want
12 to shift directions a little bit in my
13 next series of questions, so I'll pass
14 it to my colleagues. But I definitely
15 would love to come back to ask Captain
16 Overwise just a few questions about some
17 infrastructure stuff.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: That will be
19 fine, Member Thomas.

20 Chair recognizes Member
21 Gauthier.

22 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
23 you, Mr. Chair. And I also wanted to
24 thank and commend Councilmember Thomas
25 for having this hearing. It's a really

1 important topic that we have to dig into
2 as a City.

3 Captain Otherwise, I appreciated
4 the data that you showed that aligned a
5 lot of what we're seeing in terms of
6 traffic safety and traffic incidents
7 with gun violence. It was striking to
8 see it that way from a hard data
9 perspective, because anecdotally that's
10 what we're finding in our District.

11 We have probably a list of
12 requests 60 blocks long at least for
13 safety interventions in the same areas
14 where we're experiencing very high
15 levels of gun violence. And I just hope
16 that -- I know that you're asking for
17 more resources for enforcement and I
18 definitely think that we have to look
19 into enforcement and how we can be
20 better there. But I also hope that as a
21 City we can raise the priority level
22 with which we address these
23 neighborhoods through infrastructure
24 improvements.

25 In my mind, these neighborhoods

1 that are already under siege due to gun
2 violence should be top on the list with
3 Streets and with OTIS in terms of the
4 traffic improvements that they're asking
5 for and I hope that we can work towards
6 that. And thank you so much for the
7 data that you showed. It was very
8 illuminating.

9 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: Thank you.

10 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: I
11 wanted to ask about a specific case, and
12 I understand if you don't have the
13 information with you today, but one of
14 the reasons I'm so grateful for this
15 hearing is that what we saw in 2020
16 played out in a very tragic way in the
17 3rd District, Avante Reynolds, a
18 25-year-old mother was struck and killed
19 on Cobbs Creek Parkway. And it was such
20 a tragic event.

21 It did spur the community and
22 elected officials to call our City
23 agencies and state agencies to action.
24 So at that time, my office has worked
25 with State Rep. McClinton, Senator

1 Williams, Councilmember Johnson and even
2 our Register of Wills with Streets and
3 PennDot to get improvements out there to
4 the Parkway pretty quickly.

5 But I have to admit, I'm in the
6 dark about the actual investigation.
7 And I was wondering if you could share
8 any information now or you could follow
9 up with my office with information.

10 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: I can
11 certainly follow up with your office.
12 We did take custody of the vehicle that
13 we believe was involved and we lack
14 enough information to say for certain
15 that it was the vehicle that was
16 involved, so we still have investigative
17 work to do there. In terms, of the
18 infrastructure, I'll leave that to
19 Ms. Reynolds. But what I will say is
20 that with improved technology, forensic
21 mapping, for example, we can assist
22 Streets, OTIS with the data that they
23 need to make those improvements and
24 infrastructure.

25 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.

1 I get what you're saying. Thank you so
2 much for your work and for all the
3 information you shared today.

4 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

5 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: Thank you.
6 I appreciate it.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
8 Member.

9 Chair recognizes Councilmember
10 Brooks.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Thank you
12 so much. You mentioned the frequency of
13 hit-and-run vehicular accidents amongst
14 communities of color and a correlation
15 with increased gun violence. Why do you
16 believe that we're seeing these
17 increases in both of these crimes at
18 these rates?

19 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: I wish I had
20 the answer to that for you,
21 Councilwoman. What I can say is that
22 they're linked by location. Whatever it
23 is about those locations where a crime
24 and traffic collisions collide, we need
25 to investigate that and figure out why

1 and find solutions to mitigate that.

2 Like I said, the investigative
3 capabilities on our end can help with
4 some of that data, so that research and
5 analysis can help the Police
6 Commissioner and Deputy Commissioners
7 develop solutions to address those
8 problems. As I sit here today, I wish I
9 knew the answer to that. We wouldn't be
10 sitting here having this hearing if we
11 did.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Have you
13 guys had an opportunity to compare
14 neighborhood complaints around those
15 certain areas, whether it's traffic
16 concerns or construction or all of these
17 other things with the data around these
18 hit-and-runs?

19 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: I have not.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Okay.
21 Because my concern is some of the data
22 that can be gathered around what's
23 happening in communities, it could be
24 directly related to a lot of other
25 things that we see happening in our

1 communities that you may be able to get
2 that information from community members
3 when it comes to safety, so I was
4 just --

5 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: I don't get
6 the opportunity to communicate with a
7 lot of the District Captains. I'm sure
8 they have a lot of that information that
9 you asked about. I don't get the
10 opportunity to communicate with them
11 very much about that. Again, everything
12 that I do gets overshadowed by the
13 violence, the gun violence and the
14 violent crimes.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Okay.
16 Thank you so much, Captain.

17 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: Sure.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
19 Member Brooks.

20 Before I recognize Member Gym,
21 can you for purposes of illustration
22 what happens from the time we recognize
23 a hit-and-run, what is the steps and
24 procedures? In particular, is there an
25 analysis of the intersection or street

1 where it happened?

2 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: That happens
3 later on, sir. But I meet monthly with
4 Ms. Reynolds and Kelly Egan and we go
5 over the fatalities that occur the month
6 before and we discuss what contributing
7 factors that we know at the time
8 contributed to that, and that kind of a
9 analysis happens a lot with oTIS.

10 From the time we get a call, my
11 officers respond. And one of the first
12 things we do after we process the scene
13 and talk to any witnesses is to go out
14 and surveil for video. That requires a
15 lot of leg-work and a lot of time. And
16 as I showed you with our staffing
17 distributed the way it is, sometimes
18 that's a challenge.

19 I do get help from the
20 Divisional detectives and from the
21 Districts in that case, because actually
22 they're more familiar with where the
23 video is located based on their previous
24 assignments than we are. So I do get
25 help with that. That's where we start.

1 COUNCILMAN JONES: So, for
2 example, I think it's Broad and
3 Glenwood, every other month somebody's
4 hit there. It was so bad that I almost
5 in one instance thought I was hearing an
6 old report because the circumstances
7 were very similar. And I think the time
8 of day would matter. So if it's 2:00 in
9 the morning and people tend to think
10 that they're the only one on the
11 highway, that that should matter.
12 Weather conditions should matter.
13 Whether or not traffic lights were
14 operational should matter. Whether or
15 not I heard you say cameras could
16 capture what happened for investigative
17 purposes, that should matter.

18 I was wondering if there's a
19 standard, all right, fatality, we're on
20 scene and maybe a 10-point checklist
21 that you have which is standard that you
22 can share?

23 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: Not that I
24 can share you. I wasn't prepared for
25 that question. We do have a protocol we

1 follow for fatal crashes. It's
2 basically for any crashes we
3 investigate. The fatality just means
4 that we use more resources in a shorter
5 amount of time to try to solve that,
6 especially when it's a hit-and-run.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: All right.
8 Would you please at some point provide
9 that to the Chair so that I can provide
10 that to members of this Committee. So
11 that as we circle back on budget, we can
12 ask these questions again.

13 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: Yes.

14 COUNCILMAN JONES: Chair
15 recognizes Member Gym.

16 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you
17 very much, Mr. Chairman.

18 Captain Overwise, could you
19 just clarify something that you said
20 earlier. I just want to make sure I
21 understood you clearly. Did you say
22 that you had trouble with staffing in
23 terms of reaching out for video camera
24 footage or are you talking more about a
25 lack of video camera footage?

1 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: No, no.
2 What I was saying was that trying to
3 track down video camera footage takes a
4 lot of leg-work and it takes a lot of
5 time, especially when you get one source
6 of video, then you have to spider-web
7 out to try to get that next source of
8 video and to continue that chain until
9 you get a good enough piece of video to
10 get a description out there.

11 One of the better examples is
12 the crash that happened at St. Vincent's
13 and Summerdale Street. We just got a
14 \$20,000 award approved for that and we
15 announced it on the news the other day.
16 That requires a lot of leg-work, and I
17 actually got help from the family of
18 Saixiang Lin who helped us with that.
19 That help is invaluable because again
20 they went and they found video of the
21 person walking away. And without that
22 picture -- we still don't have any good
23 tips on that. But without that good
24 picture there, we would be very
25 hard-pressed to solve that. I hope that

1 somebody sees that and can recognize
2 that person and give us a call.

3 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: So I just
4 wanted to clarify because I know the
5 City is talking about additional monies
6 for the possibility of more surveillance
7 cameras. And is there a feeling that if
8 there were more City-funded cameras,
9 that would assist at these high rate of
10 hit-and-run intersections?

11 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: Sure. In
12 the areas where we do see a lot, it
13 would help us to put more cameras there.
14 A lot of times we get unlucky because
15 these cameras, they pan automatically.
16 And sometimes we're lucky. Sometimes
17 we're not lucky. Sometimes we see the
18 crash on those City cameras. Sometimes
19 the camera pans away right before we see
20 what we need to see in order to get that
21 good information. It would help.

22 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: One question
23 that I also had, and I'm sorry if I
24 missed this, but did you have an
25 analysis on time of day for hit-and-

1 runs?

2 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: I did not
3 break this down by time, just by
4 location. We could further break it
5 down by time and give it to our resource
6 analysis to do that, so that we get the
7 3 eight-hour periods for example to see
8 when they happened. That would be
9 helpful. I didn't have that for this
10 presentation, but we can get it. It's
11 not a big task to get.

12 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Yeah. I'm
13 just trying to understand a little bit
14 about whether if an intersection is
15 well-known to be unmanned and to have
16 kind of a lot of neglect around it
17 whether it doesn't really matter what
18 time of day it is, it's just kind of a
19 place where anything can happen, and
20 unfortunately it too frequently does.
21 But I'm also interested in a little bit
22 about some of the time-of-day issues.

23 And related to that, what is
24 the current status of the school
25 crossing guards within the Police

1 Department? Is it currently housed with
2 your Department or has it --

3 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: I'm sorry.
4 I don't have that answer.

5 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Or do OTIS
6 rather?

7 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: I don't have
8 that answer. I'm sorry.

9 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: I'll ask
10 that of Mr. Puchalsky.

11 MR. WHITE: It's Matt White
12 from the Police Commissioner's office.
13 The school crossing guards are housed in
14 the Police Department, but I don't have
15 any information prepared on the status
16 of the Crossing Guard Unit. But I'm
17 happy to jot down any specific questions
18 you have and get you answers.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: It was my
20 understanding that at some point the
21 School Crossing Guard Unit was to
22 transfer over into OTIS, because this is
23 a longstanding concern that we certainly
24 brought in. When Councilmember Gauthier
25 talked about particular neighborhoods

1 being neglected, one of the things that
2 we recognized is that presence of adults
3 within a community, and school crossing
4 guards certainly count as a four-to-six
5 hour position -- I'm not exactly clear,
6 it might just be a four-hour position --
7 but at multiple points during the day --
8 actually, I think it's a six-hour
9 position. It's two hours in the
10 morning. I think it could be an hour or
11 so in the middle of the day and then two
12 hours at the end of the day, a regular
13 presence of adult personnel. And to be
14 clear, there's an allocation of well
15 over 1,000 school crossing guards across
16 the District.

17 Our issue with the Police
18 Department is that we have traditionally
19 had huge numbers of vacancies at
20 dangerous intersections. And so, again
21 what we're trying to underscore is these
22 are budgeted positions within the
23 Department. We have talked for a long
24 time about challenges with civil
25 service, difficulties in training, the

1 low level of positions.

2 But most importantly, what it
3 speaks to is that there isn't really
4 somebody at the Police Department who
5 has had the kind of attention and care
6 for an issue which is obligated to put
7 many different adults at core
8 intersections where young people and
9 families routinely cross as many as
10 three times a day, and to some extent
11 having an adult on those corners each
12 and every day during the school year is
13 a reminder that this a place of
14 community, this is a place for children,
15 these are a place of families and the
16 routine and regular presence has really
17 been an important issue for us.

18 The issue with the Police
19 Department is that --

20 (Background interruption.)

21 MR. WHITE: You want to --
22 Captain, your microphone.

23 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: You might
24 not be muted. One of the issues is that
25 there's just a huge number of vacancies.

1 And so, I know there was a discussion of
2 moving them to oTIS. I would like to
3 hear a little bit of feedback on that
4 and again, where you think the status of
5 the crossing guards might currently be
6 within your Department.

7 MR. WHITE: Thank you,
8 Councilmember. I do agree that the
9 school crossing guards are an important
10 part --

11 COUNCILMAN JONES: Say your
12 name again for the record.

13 MR. WHITE: I'm sorry. It's
14 Matthew White. I do agree completely
15 that the school crossing guards are a
16 core part of our communities and a
17 fixture in neighborhoods. I'm certainly
18 happy to look into both the issue of the
19 status of where the crossing guards will
20 be housed as a position and also the
21 status of the number of vacancies and to
22 the extent that we can break it down by
23 location. If those are also
24 particularly dangerous intersections,
25 I'm happy to look into all of those

1 matters and get you a direct answer.

2 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: That's fine.

3 We've been working on this issue for a
4 while directly with Commissioner
5 Coulter. But we do really want to
6 underscore that it's another area, to my
7 colleagues about neighborhoods that
8 should be supported, should have the
9 presence of adults in them and are again
10 areas where we see vacancies and it
11 really does need to be valued, and I
12 want to see where the discussions are
13 with transferring the unit over to OTIS
14 if the Police Department -- it just may
15 not be a priority. So we're willing to
16 acknowledge that, but it does need to be
17 taken care of in other places if it's
18 not a priority for the PPD. So thank
19 you very much.

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
21 very much. And those were two important
22 points that I took note of. One,
23 crossing guards on 63rd and Race, there
24 was a hit-and-run fatality a couple
25 years back of a tender-aged youth and it

1 was at an intersection where there
2 should have been a crossing guard.

3 And the second thing to
4 underscore is time of day, what time of
5 night. That might be relevant if you're
6 looking at the closing of bars and
7 taverns and what happens during those
8 hours. And so much so that you can
9 maybe even compensate by adjusting the
10 patterns of street lights. So Walnut
11 Street and Chestnut Street in the 3rd
12 District are hidden highways that might
13 be thought about in that regard, so
14 anyway.

15 We're circling back around to
16 Member Thomas.

17 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank you,
18 Mr. Chair. I appreciate it.

19 Councilmember Gym actually just
20 talked about the idea of more cameras
21 and the possibility of more cameras
22 helping. Can you help us explain -- we
23 saw some reports that talked about the
24 fact that even when the evidence is
25 there and the constituent themselves is

1 able to gather evidence of a hit-and-
2 run, that that information still doesn't
3 get investigated. So can you explain to
4 us why only 5 percent of hit-and-run
5 crashes are actually investigated? And
6 then also, if we increase the number of
7 cameras as far as surveillance, how we
8 will then be able to address the issue
9 if we're only investigating about 5
10 percent of hit-and-runs right now? How
11 we can say cameras will help us address
12 this issue even when people are sending
13 us the footage that they have, we're
14 still not able to offer viable
15 consequences currently?

16 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: You make a
17 good point. People do give us video and
18 sometimes the quality of the video is
19 not good enough to get an
20 identification, so it's not that we
21 don't investigate. I think the one
22 report that you're referring to the
23 officers failed to call my Unit ad
24 that's why we didn't investigate it
25 right away. However, we did after we

1 were notified about it. But quality of
2 video is important.

3 And as I said before, with the
4 City cameras sometimes we're lucky and
5 we get that tag. Really what we need is
6 the tag and a good description of the
7 vehicle or driver. And that's the other
8 thing too, is that we have to be able to
9 put a specific driver behind the wheel
10 of that vehicle. It's not enough to
11 find the vehicle.

12 I have several vehicles in
13 custody that we can't identify a driver
14 for. And that's our next step. We have
15 to identify who was driving that vehicle
16 at the time of the crash, very
17 difficult. Very difficult to solve --
18 compared to violent crimes where often
19 there's a nexus between the actor and
20 the victim. People meet in crashes by
21 happenstance, so there's no connection
22 between the two parties and we don't
23 have anything to go on investigatively
24 to try to solve that. We have to rely
25 on pictures, good pictures, good video,

1 good witnesses and solve identification
2 so we can get an arrest warrant.

3 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: So putting
4 our fiscal hat on thinking about this
5 with a solution lens, right, are you,
6 Captain, recommending as us as
7 Councilmembers to look at some level of
8 investment into technology and cameras?
9 And can you assure us that an investment
10 in technology and cameras will put us in
11 a position where we will be able to
12 address this issue?

13 Because I know that this is
14 something Councilmember Gym brought up,
15 and I think that throughout your
16 testimony and listening to your
17 response, you're suggesting that more
18 cameras will help address this issue.
19 But I don't know if we have faith in
20 that particular position for this
21 problem, and I don't know if it could be
22 a solution or it couldn't be.

23 But I just want to go on record
24 with your recommendations as it relates
25 to solutions. Because again, I think

1 you talked about increasing staff from
2 maybe 36 people to 53 people. But we
3 want to be innovative and creative as it
4 relates to how we figure this stuff out.
5 So what are some suggestions that you
6 think -- even with cameras or without
7 cameras, what are suggestions that you
8 feel like we can do to address this
9 issue without increasing staff?

10 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: That's a
11 good question, because the chance of
12 increasing staff in my Unit is very
13 slim. So what we need to do is force
14 multipliers in a way of technology,
15 which I described earlier. I'm working
16 on a proposal, a grant concept. It's a
17 \$300,000 proposal. It's a lot of
18 equipment, but it's equipment that will
19 help us in the way of solving the
20 crashes and also holding drivers
21 accountable. Because let's not forget
22 we're talking about hit-and-runs, but if
23 we prevent all crashes or do our best to
24 prevent all crashes, we're going to
25 prevent hit-and-runs as well.

1 So what we need to do is get
2 the data to our Research Analysis Team
3 to tell us how to go do that and the way
4 to do that with enhanced investigative
5 capabilities, and that's where the
6 technology comes in. Right now we use
7 wheels and tape measures to measure out
8 a crime scene and we sketch them by hand
9 because we don't have a forensic mapping
10 system that can do the work of two
11 people in a matter -- in a very short
12 period of time, and that's what I mean
13 by forced multiplier.

14 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Sure.
15 Thank you. I appreciate it. So as we
16 look into this idea of training, because
17 I know there was a report that you were
18 a part of that talked about the use of
19 training as it relates to staffing. Can
20 you elaborate a little bit more on that
21 as it relates to training? Can you talk
22 to us a little bit about who you feel
23 should get training and what training
24 can do to address this issue?

25 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: Okay. Well,

1 the members of my Unit have three levels
2 of training. And I have not been able
3 to get -- I have people scheduled, but
4 the pandemic hit and everything got
5 canceled. But there's three levels of
6 training. There's on-scene crash
7 investigation. Then there is technical
8 analysis and then there's crash
9 reconstruction. Crash reconstruction is
10 the most advanced form of training. All
11 this again helps us to get data that we
12 use to supply to PennDot and to Research
13 Analysis to get better information on a
14 crashes. And PennDot uses that
15 information to develop programs for
16 traffic safety.

17 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: I think
18 it's important that we're conscious of
19 who we're using as it relates to
20 collecting data, research and
21 information. You referenced the AAA
22 Foundation earlier. And I, again,
23 really want to push back on the
24 socioeconomic side. Even looking at the
25 map that you put out there in the midst

1 of your presentation, I remember there
2 being a lot of incidents as it relates
3 to hit-and-runs and things of that
4 capacity in the North Philadelphia area,
5 right.

6 So thinking about North
7 Philadelphia, and I'm sure that
8 Councilmember Gauthier can relate to
9 this comparison in her District, if we
10 have an area like North Philadelphia
11 that we know is populated with a lot of
12 college students, how we can tie a
13 socioeconomic status to this particular
14 issue? Because I think what it begins
15 to do is -- when we use stats like this,
16 it begins to kind of open the door for
17 more illegal stop-and-frisk in the City
18 of Philadelphia. And I think that's a
19 significant problem that we have as it
20 relates to our City.

21 We do a ton of stop-and-frisk,
22 specifically people who look like me.
23 But that method clearly is, A, not
24 addressing the gun violence issue
25 because we clearly still have an

1 epidemic on our hands and, B, not
2 addressing the traffic issue because
3 again, we've seen more fatalities last
4 year than what we've seen in recent
5 history.

6 So in the midst of the research
7 that we're doing and in the midst of
8 thinking about how do we address this
9 issue, I'm wondering about the racial
10 and equity lens and how those
11 conversations are taking place. Because
12 again, I can tell you a personal
13 narrative of someone who I know who
14 unfortunately was hit and it led to a
15 fatality right outside the Police
16 District at Broad and Godfrey. I can
17 look at the socioeconomic status of
18 people who live in that neighborhood.

19 But if you live in that
20 neighborhood, you know people coming
21 from Abington flying up and down Broad
22 Street all hours of the night. And if
23 that crime remained unsolved because we
24 said 36 percent of cases are solved, but
25 that means that over 60 percent aren't

1 solved, 64 percent exactly aren't
2 solved. So how can we tie socioeconomic
3 status to something like that when the
4 economic status in the neighborhood
5 might be one thing, but the person who
6 could have hit that person could be a
7 millionaire from Abington who was
8 speeding from Center City going out of
9 town.

10 So again, I really just want to
11 push back and hear your perspective,
12 Captain, as it relates to how we think
13 about these things through a lens that
14 has some level of racial equity.

15 CAPTAIN OTHERWISE: All right,
16 sir. So traffic safety is an
17 investment. When you said the
18 socioeconomic status, again that was one
19 research that I pointed to from AAA and
20 that's their research. I agree with you
21 100 percent that the driver can be from
22 anywhere. And one of the things that I
23 talked about with OTIS, and they will
24 tell you the same thing, is we're trying
25 to figure out what zip codes that folks

1 involved in the crashes are coming from,
2 where they live, because it does make a
3 difference.

4 It just seems that where you
5 have neighborhoods that are low income
6 and the data shows that those
7 neighborhoods are populated with
8 minorities, all these things happening
9 in the same location, and that's the
10 common thread, is that location. And
11 so, I think budget-wise if you do not
12 make an investment in traffic safety in
13 those locations, then perhaps you're
14 doing a disservice to the people in
15 those locations.

16 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: So I don't
17 disagree with that at all. And I think
18 that that investment is significant. It
19 should happen, it's important. But
20 again, I think if you look at it through
21 a certain perspective, what that
22 investment looks like can look very,
23 very different, like that investment can
24 be somewhat predatorial if done the
25 wrong way.

1 So again, I'm really concerned
2 about this issue. Because what I don't
3 want us to do is use this as a means and
4 mechanism to overpolice communities of
5 color, right. We know there's a gun
6 violence issue and if we want to do a
7 deeper dive into that, I would love to.
8 Because we're not going to resolve the
9 issue of gun violence by overpolicing
10 neighborhoods. That's never going to be
11 a way we resolve gun violence.

12 It can be a way you temporarily
13 stop some things happening on a
14 particular block and in a particular
15 neighborhood, but gun violence is a
16 bigger symptom of other issues that we
17 have related to poverty, poor education
18 and a lack of resources going into
19 communities that they didn't necessarily
20 get. So if we're saying that we need to
21 invest in neighborhoods to prevent these
22 issues, again I just don't want that
23 investment to happen through a
24 predatorial lens, right.

25 This is a hearing and I feel

1 like it's important. It's a
2 conversation that I know we need to
3 have. But I feel it moving into a
4 direction that I feel like it's not
5 advantageous to the people that we're
6 essentially trying to serve.

7 So that's why I really want to
8 just take a couple of moments to get
9 some of this stuff on the record. And I
10 understand, Captain, that you were just
11 referencing one study. But it's your
12 job, it's our obligation as members of
13 Council to kind of pay attention to the
14 details and push back on things where
15 that can put us in a position where we
16 can hurt the same people that we're
17 trying to help.

18 I didn't hear clear
19 recommendations outside of technology.
20 Do you have any other clear
21 recommendations that you feel like
22 outside of technology that can put us in
23 a position where we can address this
24 issue?

25 I'll give you an example. I

1 talked to a lot of -- actually
2 Councilmember Jones forced me to go on a
3 bike tour and I probably should do it
4 again because I need the cardio. But in
5 the midst of that tour, one of the
6 things that they talked to us about was
7 infrastructure issues in cities, right.
8 So they talked to us about roads and
9 neighborhoods that we should think about
10 trying to change as it relates to how
11 wide they are. Because they said when
12 roads are wide, it's not a lot of lights
13 or anything in between, people tend to
14 drive faster.

15 So what are your thoughts on
16 maybe some infrastructure investment?
17 We said 12 percent of the roads in the
18 City of Philadelphia are where the
19 majority of the crashes happen. Has
20 there been any dialogue around some
21 serious investment around those 12
22 percent of roads from an infrastructure
23 perspective? I just hear the technology
24 side, but what do we think of that?

25 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: I think that

1 question is better answered by --

2 COUNCILMAN JONES: Friendly
3 amendment, on the same roads that the
4 Member has talked about some of those
5 are state highways. So if you look at
6 Henry Avenue, if you look at Roosevelt
7 Boulevard, if you look at some of those
8 areas, add to his question how you are
9 coordinating with state authorities to
10 make them safer?

11 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: And I know
12 we will hear from oTIS later. But
13 again, Captain, you're an expert, right.
14 You talk about this on news stations.
15 You've been doing this for decades now.
16 Your opinion and your perspective on
17 this stuff really matters. So of
18 course, we're going to ask oTIS what
19 they think as far as infrastructure
20 investment, but I think your opinion and
21 your perspective matters just as much as
22 theirs. So I don't want you to pun it
23 to oTIS. We'll get to them. They'll --

24 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: I'm not
25 trying to pun it. I appreciate the fact

1 that you called me an expert, but I
2 don't think that I'm an expert at all.
3 Like I said, I've been doing this in
4 this position for the last three years.
5 All right. When it comes to
6 recommendations, I recommend that you
7 give my Unit the ability to get as much
8 data to oTIS as possible so that they
9 can make those recommendations because
10 we're not engineers, we're
11 investigators. So if we can get the
12 data to oTIS and then they can make
13 those decisions, it will all help to
14 contribute to making our roads safer.

15 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank you.
16 My last question and then I think we can
17 move on to other Councilmembers because
18 I think they have other questions too.
19 We know that we have traffic officers
20 coming down the pipeline at some point.
21 And we know that those traffic officers
22 as of now have a specific focus in, I
23 believe, Center City.

24 What are your thoughts on
25 traffic officers being used as a

1 mechanism to essentially address this
2 issue? If the traffic officer, similar
3 to what Councilmember Gym talked about
4 earlier, had a lens that came out of
5 Managing Director's Office, something
6 like that, clearly weren't armed or
7 anything like, but what about innovative
8 ways of putting people like that in
9 neighborhoods and in places where we see
10 a high density as it relates to hit-and-
11 runs and traffic and things like that?
12 I would love to hear your opinion on
13 that as well, Captain.

14 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: You're
15 talking about the Traffic District in
16 the Philadelphia Police Department?

17 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Well, no.
18 We know that we have traffic officers
19 that are specifically going to be
20 focused on the Center City area. We
21 know that the traffic officers that are
22 going to start in Center City and
23 they're going to start with the focus of
24 addressing congestion and a lot of the
25 congestion and the traffic that we see

1 in Center City.

2 What I'm asking you is if a
3 similar model, right, these are unarmed
4 people, these are folks that are working
5 out of the Managing Director's Office,
6 they'll have a different level of
7 training, they'll come from a total
8 different budget, what if a similar
9 model were used in some of these places
10 where you talked about that had areas of
11 a high correlation of traffic accidents
12 and gun violence, right. So what if we
13 had a different type of tactical person,
14 whatever you want to call them, they can
15 be traffic officers, they can be called
16 community liaisons, I don't care what
17 you call them, but what if we took that
18 similar investment and put it in these
19 areas where we've seen high density
20 incidents, specifically in the areas
21 that you drew the correlation between
22 gun violence and high-traffic incidents?
23 What are your thoughts on that?

24 And that will be my final
25 question for this witness, Mr. Chair.

1 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: I would say
2 in high-crime areas that you could use
3 the people that you just talked about to
4 displace the people from Center City so
5 that the uniformed officers could
6 address the problems in high-crime
7 areas. Beyond that, I'm not in a
8 position as the Captain of the Accident
9 Investigation Unit to speak about that.
10 That's a deployment decision. That's
11 not at my level.

12 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Okay.
13 Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate it.

14 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
15 Member Thomas.

16 We're going to go with Member
17 Brooks, Member Gauthier and then Member
18 Gym. And then we're going to segue to
19 the next panel because I think we have
20 nine more panels or nine more
21 testimonies; is that right,
22 Ms. Williams?

23 THE CLERK: Something like
24 that, yes. Maybe eight.

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: Okay.

1 Member Brooks.

2 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Thank you
3 so much. I just need clarification kind
4 of to the line of questioning by
5 Councilmember Thomas.

6 Am I clear that currently
7 there's not coordination between PPD and
8 oTIS around solving hit-and-runs to
9 determine whether there's a correlation
10 between traffic engineering, the need
11 for speed bumps or whatever currently
12 happening? Because I'm thinking -- I
13 don't want to speak for my Council
14 District people, but I'm pretty sure
15 they can spell out high-risk areas in
16 their Districts, and those high-risk
17 areas as an At-large person also
18 probably correlate with the requests
19 from community members around speed
20 bumps, school crossings signs, the need
21 for school crossing guards during the
22 day, the need for more lighting and the
23 need for -- I'm trying think of the
24 fancy word the urbanists use where they
25 have the curb cuts that I only see in

1 Center City and West Philly. I have yet
2 to see one in North Philly. I think
3 it's called gaslighting or treelighting
4 or some kind of lighting term that the
5 urbanists use.

6 So my concern is if previously
7 or currently prior to creating this
8 report, if coordination was not done
9 with oTIS around the need for
10 investments into traffic infrastructure
11 in some of these same areas, I'm not
12 understanding why we're asking for a
13 larger investment or this conversation
14 about more technology when there are
15 other things that have been missing
16 around infrastructure in these
17 communities like the school crossing
18 guard that Councilmember Gym talked
19 about? And I've been on the front line
20 of fighting for a school crossing guard
21 at the expressway at 15th and St. Luke,
22 right. So these are real live issues
23 that people from the community can talk
24 about. So if that hasn't been done up
25 to this point, I'm kind of confused of

1 what are we talking about around cameras
2 if we haven't made the real investments
3 in these communities of color, which are
4 also primarily where increased gun
5 violence is seen.

6 That's why earlier I asked you
7 about the correlation between the two.
8 But as I'm hearing, I'm not hearing the
9 connect between traffic safety and
10 policing being a solution to some of
11 these vehicular homicides.

12 And somebody else mentioned
13 about people flying from the suburbs.
14 It was a six car pile-up at Broad and
15 Huntington Park, which is a high traffic
16 area and probably for hit-and-runs and
17 it was done by someone from Bensalem and
18 crashed up six cars of people that lived
19 in the neighborhoods. So what would
20 that investigation look like? Because
21 the police never showed up at the scene,
22 the young man was intoxicated. His
23 family members drove from Bensalem and
24 picked him up and no police were at the
25 scene, but six community members cars

1 were totaled.

2 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: I'm not
3 aware of that particular incident. That
4 disturbs me that you tell me that. The
5 only thing I can think of is that my
6 Unit wasn't notified. But I can look
7 into that. If you can get me the date,
8 time and location, I can follow up on
9 that for you.

10 As far as coordinating with
11 oTIS, as I said before I meet with them
12 once a month and we discuss all the
13 fatal crashes that happened in the month
14 before and then we come up with possible
15 strategies and then oTIS takes it from
16 there. I could help them better if as I
17 said before better resources to get them
18 the data that they need.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: I will
20 get you the information for that
21 accident. I think it's --

22 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: I appreciate
23 that.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: I will
25 get you the information before this call

1 is over.

2 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: Thank you.

3 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
4 Member Brooks.

5 Member Gauthier and then Member
6 Gym.

7 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
8 you, Mr. Chair.

9 I just wanted to say that I
10 didn't take offense at Captain
11 Overwise's chart showing the high number
12 of traffic safety incidents that
13 correlate with gun violence and with a
14 high number of people of color and
15 people of poverty being prevalent in the
16 neighborhood.

17 I do agree with Councilmember
18 Thomas that it's important what we do
19 with that data and we should not be
20 looking to just use that data to justify
21 enforcement. But I also don't think we
22 should shy away from that data, because
23 to me what we saw on those charts is
24 emblematic of a systematic disinvestment
25 in these neighborhoods that has happened

1 for decades.

2 The same neighborhoods where we
3 saw the traffic incidents are the same
4 neighborhoods that were redlined.

5 They're the same neighborhoods that have
6 struggled throughout this entire COVID
7 pandemic. People have gotten the most
8 sick. People have lost their jobs the
9 most. They're the same neighborhoods
10 that don't have as high access to
11 quality schools and they're the same
12 neighborhoods where we have not invested
13 in basic traffic and other types of
14 infrastructure that could help with
15 those issues.

16 So I don't think that we should
17 shy away from that reality. Instead, I
18 think that that information and that
19 data needs to be instructive for us. It
20 needs to be instructive for us as we
21 move into budget season about what and
22 who gets priority in this City.

23 And I'm hopeful that as we look
24 at neighborhoods that are under an
25 incredible amount of stress from

1 multiple crises at the same time, that
2 that's what we're going to prioritize.
3 And that that's what's going to I hope
4 rise to the top. So I just wanted to
5 make that comment. Thank you.

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.
7 Chair recognizes Member Gym.

8 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you
9 very much, Mr. Chair.

10 I just wanted to ask if
11 Mr. White could come back. Because I
12 did just want to confirm that in our
13 budget cycle when we passed the budget
14 in June of 2020, there was an explicit
15 note that the Police Department
16 personnel would be in part reduced
17 because of the transfer of the School
18 Crossing Guard Unit to oTIS.

19 And I wanted to ask, Mr. White,
20 it sounds like you are unaware of that
21 and that that has not occurred; is that
22 correct?

23 MR. WHITE: I am unaware as to
24 whether it has or has not occurred. So
25 I have made a note to look into the

1 status of school crossing guards being
2 transferred to oTIS to get you an answer
3 to the question.

4 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Okay. And
5 you are unaware of ever hearing that the
6 Administration's intent was to transfer
7 the school crossing guards out of the
8 PPD?

9 MR. WHITE: No, I do recall
10 conversations of that nature taking
11 place I believe during hearings in 2020.

12 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Okay. All
13 right. Thank you very much. I just
14 wanted to clarify that.

15 MR. WHITE: Thank you,
16 Councilmember.

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
18 for your testimony.

19 Are there any other questions
20 for this panel?

21 (No response.)

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: Seeing none
23 in the chat room, Ms. Williams will you
24 please read the name of the next panel
25 to testify or next person to testify.

1 THE CLERK: Christopher
2 Puchalsky.

3 MR. PUCHALSKY: Hi. Good
4 morning, Councilmembers. I'm going to
5 share my screen now. I also have a
6 PowerPoint presentation to go along with
7 my testimony this morning. It says it's
8 coming up. I hope it is. So my name is
9 Christopher Puchalsky. I'm the Director
10 of Policy & Strategic Initiatives at
11 oTIS, the City's Office of
12 Transportation Infrastructure and
13 Sustainability, and I'm joined by my
14 colleague Lily Reynolds.

15 MS. REYNOLDS: Good morning.
16 My name is Lily Reynolds, Deputy
17 Director of the Office of Complete
18 Streets with oTIS and I manage all of
19 our Vision Zero program initiatives.
20 Pleased to be here.

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
22 for your patience. Please begin.

23 MR. PUCHALSKY: There was a lot
24 of great ideas put forth, a lot of great
25 discussion that we were listening to. I

1 don't know that I will be able to address
2 everything that you all touched on, but
3 we hope to shed some more light on a lot
4 of the issues that were just discussed
5 with the Captain.

6 I want to start with our goal.
7 Our goal is straight up eliminating all
8 traffic deaths in the City of
9 Philadelphia. When we think of a
10 traffic death, you'll notice we don't
11 use the word accident. We use the word
12 crash. We don't think these are just
13 accidents. We think these are -- we
14 don't think they're a fact of life. We
15 don't think they're inevitable. We
16 think these are preventable incidents.

17 I don't want to take away from
18 the difficulty of achieving this. When
19 we look at all of the reasons and you
20 got to ask why seven times before you
21 really get to all the reasons. Some of
22 these are really enormous in the
23 difficulty to solve, but we do think
24 that we can eliminate traffic deaths in
25 the City of Philadelphia.

1 Councilmember Thomas, and I'd
2 like to thank the Councilmember for
3 sponsoring the resolution, for bringing
4 up this issue. This is an issue that is
5 very ripe. It has not been discussed
6 enough, both the hit-and-runs and the
7 overall traffic fatalities last year.

8 Traffic fatalities were up 78
9 percent in 2020. This isn't something
10 that goes up and down by a lot every
11 year. You will see the trend line over
12 about the last decade on this slide, and
13 you'll see the increase that we saw in
14 2020 shown. The numbers for 2020 were
15 literally off the chart. We had to make
16 a new chart. That's how terrible 2020
17 was in Philadelphia in terms of traffic
18 crashes. And the term is sometimes used
19 in my field, traffic violence, when we
20 think about the harm done to people from
21 these preventable incidents. And I can
22 only think that it was -- all of the
23 other crises that our City faced is why
24 this number that's also important did
25 not probably get the attention that it

1 deserves, but I'm glad we're talking
2 about it today.

3 This increase happened among
4 all modes of transportation. The blue
5 bars show the previous five-year trend
6 and the other bars show what happened in
7 2020 and whether it was people walking,
8 people riding a bike, people on a
9 motorcycle or people in an automobile.
10 We saw dramatic increases no matter how
11 you were traveling in traffic fatalities
12 in 2020.

13 Some of you might know I spent
14 three years working in the automotive
15 industry designing automobiles. The
16 modern automobile is a marvel. I was
17 just hearing on the news today that the
18 marvel of auto engineering is why Tiger
19 Woods is likely alive today and did not
20 pass away in the crash that he had
21 yesterday or the day before.

22 You have to be going very fast
23 in an automobile to die. So this shows
24 the extreme issue that our City is
25 facing, that automobile crashes where

1 you are well-protected went up 93
2 percent in 2020. We have a serious
3 problem. This map shows on the right we
4 have 2019 fatal crashes. On the left we
5 have 2020, and we have them broken down
6 between hit-and-run and nonhit-and-run
7 crashes. And we see that there was a
8 dramatic increase in hit-and-run crashes
9 in 2020 versus the year before.

10 This is the subject of our
11 hearing today. This is important.
12 Hit-and-run crashes, they shock the
13 conscience. They show a lack of concern
14 for our fellow resident, this behavior
15 leaving the scene. They are heinous in
16 a way. And so, they are important. But
17 I want to note that it's not just the
18 hit-and-run crashes that went up. The
19 nonhit-and-run crashes went from 76 to
20 115, and we think all of these are a
21 tragedy. And the biggest tragedy is
22 somebody died. It's heinous that the
23 actor who's responsible left the scene,
24 but our goal is to stop it before it
25 happened, before there was a fatal,

1 preventable incident. That's oTIS' goal
2 when we look at these numbers.

3 So I think the hit-and-run
4 conversation is very important, how to
5 hold individuals accountable for their
6 reckless behavior, for their
7 demonstration of a lack of concern for
8 their fellow person. But when we look
9 at these numbers, we're trying to
10 prevent all of them, not just when
11 someone leaves the scene
12 inappropriately.

13 It's important to remember that
14 these numbers are people. They
15 represent real people. And so, this
16 came from -- this text and picture came
17 from the Vision Zero Plan, and I'll talk
18 about it in a minute, that we put out in
19 November. These are real people with
20 families, with loved ones that lost
21 their lives. We got to keep thinking
22 about them, these numbers like that.
23 Every number is a person.

24 This is a case you might know
25 about, tragic case, gets me worked up

1 every time I think about it. But the
2 activism of Ms. Byrd's family has led to
3 real improvements, has led to the
4 introduction of speed cameras. So this
5 is also a case of tragedy that the
6 people who knew this woman have really
7 taken that tragedy and done something to
8 help their fellow residents. We have a
9 new action plan, a 2025 action plan.

10 We talked about what we have
11 done over the last three years. So we
12 put out our first action plan in 2017
13 and we updated it in November of 2020.
14 So we have done a lot. I don't think
15 we've done nearly enough. And the
16 trend -- the dramatic upward spike in
17 2020 shows that, and that we haven't yet
18 seen the dramatic increase before that.
19 So this is really just the initial down
20 payment on the steps that we need to
21 take to reduce, eliminate all traffic
22 fatalities in our City, not just
23 hit-and-runs.

24 Like what was discussed, it's
25 not every street. 80 percent of the

1 killed and serious injury crashes happen
2 on 12 percent of the streets. And like
3 the Chair said, some of these are City
4 streets, but a lot are also PennDot
5 streets. And we need to work with
6 PennDot, with the state on addressing
7 these issues. That has added
8 complication of course, but PennDot has
9 shown that they are willing to come to
10 the table and work with us. But we
11 can't stop. We can't slow down.

12 We have made some progress. So
13 the blue lines are high-injury network
14 streets where we've done something. I
15 wouldn't say all of them have been a
16 dramatic change. Some of them have been
17 significant like the road diets on
18 Chestnut Street, for example, some of
19 them have been more modern
20 interventions. And then the pink lines
21 show where we have something that is in
22 the works, where we have a project that
23 is in either planning or in design that
24 we think will make a difference. But
25 you'll notice here, the magnitude of the

1 problem is much greater than the
2 resources that we've been able to bring
3 to bear to do the really hard work of
4 finding a solution that will work for
5 communities and that will address the
6 traffic safety problems, and change is
7 hard. Change is hard.

8 And sometimes conversations
9 about narrowing the streets, that narrow
10 streets are safer, that is
11 counterintuitive. I think it's wide
12 open. There's nothing to hit, right.
13 And we come into the room and say,
14 actually this is more dangerous. It
15 takes a while to build that trust. And
16 as you know, trust in government is low.
17 It's probably as low as it's ever been.
18 So each of those projects takes a
19 significant amount of work with the
20 community, and that work isn't free and
21 it's not even cheap. It takes a lot of
22 staff hours. Lily's time, really
23 beating the bushes, having real
24 conversations with people, so there's a
25 lot of work to do.

1 The blue document, that's the
2 Vision Zero Plan that we put out
3 November of last year. That lay outs
4 the overall policies. The yellow
5 document that you see is the capital
6 plan. We took 10 of the most dangerous
7 intersections and 10 of the most
8 dangerous corridors and we started
9 saying, this is where we need to do a
10 project. This isn't even all of that
11 high-injury network, all of that 12
12 percent. This is just 10 intersections
13 and 10 corridors that are particularly
14 dangerous. And we want to move those
15 corridors forward in the next five
16 years.

17 Let me talk a little bit about
18 the approach. I think the approach
19 traditionally, this is a conceptual
20 diagram that comes from that blue
21 document, the traditional approach has
22 been mostly about behavior. So telling
23 people, hey, why don't you -- you should
24 do the right thing, right. This is the
25 education and this is enforcement.

1 That's the traditional approach of
2 traffic safety and then a lesser effort
3 about road design and about the safe
4 vehicles.

5 Enforcement and education is
6 part of the solution still, but we think
7 it's a smaller part of the solution, in
8 that designing our roads so that they
9 compel people to drive in a safer way
10 and then also people are in safer
11 vehicles. And then that's just not my
12 former employer selling you a safer car,
13 so that's also to the extent possible
14 getting people on the bus and on the
15 train and biking, where they're in a
16 vehicle that is much less likely to lead
17 to a deadly crash. When you're on the
18 bus, you are 10 to 18 times less likely
19 to die or be seriously injured in a
20 crash.

21 So there's four parts of our
22 strategy to reducing and eliminating
23 traffic crashes. One is expanding
24 automatic speed enforcement, and I'll
25 have some slides about that. The next

1 one is setting safe speed limits. So
2 right now we still don't have the
3 ability even as a City of the first
4 class to say, okay, I think the safe
5 speed limit is 20 or 25 throughout the
6 entire City. We have to do somewhat
7 laborious and with our hands-tied-
8 behind-our-backs studies on each and
9 every street to justify it and there's a
10 lot of streets in the City of
11 Philadelphia. So we need the ability to
12 set what we know from best practices are
13 safe speed limits.

14 We need to pass the legislative
15 tools at the state, but also at the
16 local level and to give us the ability
17 to move forward on these projects. And
18 then lastly, we think there should be
19 enshrined in the City Code that traffic
20 safety is important so we're still
21 developing the specifics here, but we'd
22 like before the end of this
23 Administration to work with Council on
24 the Vision Zero ordinance that states
25 both policy-wise and sets up certain

1 parameters that human lives takes
2 precedence over saving five minutes
3 getting to the store or getting to work.

4 You might have seen this
5 graphic before. This was in our
6 original report. This just shows how
7 critical slowing people down is. If I'm
8 a pedestrian and I'm hit by an
9 automobile and that automobile is going
10 20 miles an hour, I only have a 10
11 percent chance of dying. 10 miles an
12 hour faster, I have a 50 percent chance
13 of dying. If that car's going 40, I
14 have a 90 percent chance of dying. So
15 slowing down a car even by 5 or 10 miles
16 an hour drastically increases the
17 survivability of a crash. Meaning,
18 someone visits the hospital maybe has a
19 recovery that's difficult versus that
20 person is no longer with us.

21 There is an equity component
22 here and that was touched on previously.
23 We're working to get this data, so we're
24 working with the Captain, we're working
25 with PennDot to make this part of the

1 standard reporting. But the race of all
2 of the participants in a crash is not
3 automatically collected.

4 What we did though when we put
5 out this report is we did an analysis of
6 where are these dangerous streets, these
7 high-injury network streets and who
8 lives in those neighborhoods, right.
9 And what we find is that dangerous
10 streets are 30 percent more likely to be
11 in the neighborhood where residents are
12 people of color or majority people of
13 color.

14 Similarly, on an income basis,
15 these high-injury network streets are
16 three times more likely to be in a
17 neighborhood where the residents, a
18 substantial portion, are living on low
19 incomes compared to where the fewest
20 residents live in low incomes. So we
21 see there is a concentration of these
22 dangerous high-injury network streets in
23 minority neighborhoods and in low-income
24 neighborhoods. And this is a problem
25 that we frankly need to work with

1 Council on. I don't think either one of
2 us can solve this problem together -- or
3 by ourselves. We've got to solve it
4 together.

5 Let me talk a little bit about
6 automated enforcement. We think those
7 infrastructure projects, the ones
8 that -- let me just scroll up this real
9 quick, that are on the high-injury
10 network and especially the ones that are
11 in this yellow capital plan, that's the
12 thing we need to do. But to the extent
13 that enforcement is part of the
14 solution, not all of it or our first
15 step, we think that automated
16 enforcement has a lot of really
17 significant advantages.

18 And just to make sure we're on
19 the same page, we've got two automated
20 enforcement tools available to us today.
21 The one is the ARLE Program, the
22 Automatic Red Light Enforcement. That
23 was launched in 2002. And how we get an
24 ARLE camera in a place is it gets
25 reported, it gets put on a list. We do

1 a study to show that it's warranted, and
2 then City Council has to pass an
3 ordinance to say, yes, it's approved in
4 this location and PennDot has to approve
5 it also.

6 That program has been very
7 important in saving people's lives. and
8 I think this is critical here that what
9 we're interested in doing is reducing
10 killed- and serious-injury crashes. If
11 we've got some body damage, if we've got
12 a bump, you got a ding in your bumper
13 because there's a rear-end tap, that's
14 okay, we can all walk away from that.
15 It's the T-bone that these ARLE cameras
16 really prevent that send people to the
17 hospital or the morgue. And that's what
18 this program has been able to do. It's
19 been able to dramatically reduce those
20 killed- and serious-injury crashes.

21 The other tool we have is
22 automatic speed enforcement or camera
23 automated speed enforcement. And this
24 is currently allowed by the state code
25 on Roosevelt Boulevard. We're in the

1 middle of a five-year pilot. The
2 cameras just became active in August.
3 It's too early to say anything about
4 their effectiveness. Those first
5 studies should be -- we should start
6 getting data this year, but we don't
7 have it yet. But we think this is a
8 tool and we'll keep looking for the
9 effectiveness, but it's been
10 dramatically effective in other places.

11 And if you ask why has
12 Philadelphia seen a 70, 80 percent in
13 traffic fatalities during the pandemic,
14 whereas New York and D.C. have been
15 essentially flat, I think a big part of
16 that is the automated speed enforcement.
17 Both of those cities have flexible
18 ubiquitous programs throughout their
19 cities, so they have the tools to
20 control speed. I think the other
21 priority bucket is they've been
22 investing in their infrastructure that
23 we haven't been.

24 I think one of the key parts
25 here is the equity case for automated

1 speed enforcement. You get a ticket in
2 the mail. There is not the same
3 likelihood that a traffic stop is going
4 to escalate into harm for either the
5 person pulled over or for the officer.
6 Too many cases where we see a traffic
7 stop turns into violence and then it's
8 on the national news. And it's a
9 tragedy. And that doesn't happen with
10 automated speed enforcement. You get a
11 ticket in the mail.

12 Also, it doesn't take officer
13 resources. The surety of getting a
14 ticket is much more effective in
15 changing behavior than the amount of the
16 ticket. And last, I'll just say the
17 camera doesn't know the race of the
18 driver. We have to be careful that
19 we're putting them in places based on
20 the crash data and not the race of the
21 neighborhood. But that camera doesn't
22 know who's driving. The vehicle gets
23 the ticket. It doesn't
24 disproportionately pull over a certain
25 kind of driver.

1 So we think both for traffic
2 safety, we've got to solve both of these
3 problems, right. We've got a traffic
4 safety crisis, we've got an equity
5 crisis, we've got a climate crisis and
6 we've got to get solutions that can
7 address all of these, and we believe
8 automated speed enforcement cameras
9 solve some of our problems without
10 making our other problems worse. So I
11 think that's all of my presentation
12 today. Thank you so much for listening.
13 And Lily and I can take questions.

14 Lily, did you have anything to
15 add?

16 MS. REYNOLDS: No. Thank you.

17 MR. PUCHALSKY: Thank you.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
19 for that enlightening testimony.

20 Is it the will of the Committee
21 that we want to stop and question now or
22 do you want to proceed with the next
23 person to testify?

24 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Mr. Chair,
25 if it's okay with you, can we proceed

1 with -- I'm sorry. We have a guest who
2 has to leave pretty soon. My staff
3 texted me, Professor Ryerson. We can
4 proceed with Professor Ryerson so we can
5 get that testimony in before --

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: Professor,
7 are you available?

8 MS. RYERSON: I am. Hello.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: How are you.
10 State your name for the record. Thank
11 you for your patience. Please begin
12 your testimony.

13 MS. RYERSON: Certainly.
14 Hello, everyone. Thank you so much for
15 having me. I'm Professor Megan Ryerson.
16 I'm the UPS Chair of Transportation at
17 the University of Pennsylvania and I'm a
18 Professor of Transportation, Engineering
19 and Urban Planning. I'm the Founder of
20 Center Safe Mobility where I conduct
21 research on urban transportation safety
22 and I'm here today speaking from that
23 expertise. I'm also speaking as a proud
24 resident and active urban commuter and
25 someone currently considering if the

1 streets are safe enough for my 9-year-
2 old twins to walk themselves to school
3 once Philadelphia public school
4 reconvenes in person.

5 The last two testimonies really
6 covered the statistics, overall crashes
7 and hit-and-run crashes. So I'm going
8 to go right to solutions. One thing I
9 want to say before that is that we've
10 talked about hit-and-runs, we've talked
11 about overall crashes, we've talked
12 about how hit-and-runs have increased as
13 a percentage of overall crashes in 2020.
14 But if we are here to make meaningful
15 contributions to public health through
16 traffic safety, we must focus on the
17 hits, on all the traffic fatalities and
18 focus on solutions that reduce this
19 trend. Traffic fatalities, traffic
20 safety was a problem before the pandemic
21 and we need to focus on all traffic
22 fatalities.

23 When we narrow our focus of
24 safety interventions on hit-and-runs,
25 you tend to focus on surveillance and

1 enforcement in hotspot areas that see
2 many of the crashes, limiting
3 opportunities for running, threatening
4 the possibility of a ticket and hoping
5 drivers will modify their behavior to
6 comply with traffic rules. We have
7 enforcement and hope that it modifies
8 behavior.

9 In my field, study after study
10 has found that enforcement has weak to
11 little to no effect on driver
12 compliance. And also, I'll say that I
13 thought Chris Puchalsky's point about
14 how every one crash statistic is a
15 person, right. When we say that
16 something has a small but not a very
17 strong effect on compliance, right, that
18 means we're leaving ourselves open to
19 many more crashes and many more people.

20 To be effective, enforcement
21 must be relentlessly consistent,
22 geographically widespread and include
23 appropriate severe punishments that are
24 intended to modify this behavior. Given
25 the dire situation in Philadelphia

1 today, enforcement alone is not
2 insufficient -- excuse me, enforcement
3 alone is insufficient.

4 So the abundance of bad news on
5 our roadways really raises the question,
6 why is it so difficult to modify driver
7 behavior, why is it so difficult to get
8 drivers to drive slower, to be more
9 alert, to yield to pedestrians, to yield
10 to other drivers. And I'll say that
11 while much of the historical policy has
12 laid blame at the feet of the drivers
13 themselves, that's not totally untrue,
14 but it's just as much if not more so a
15 problem of how our roads are engineered
16 and managed. And we've been talking
17 about infrastructure and that's a major
18 part of the problem.

19 So I'd like to talk about two
20 reasons in particular why infrastructure
21 is such a part of the problem. And I'm
22 going to talk about the difference
23 between design speed and posted speed.
24 Now, I know Captain Overwise is here so
25 you don't have to raise your hand if

1 you've ever sped on the highway. But
2 have you ever been cruising down the
3 highway and suddenly realized you're
4 comfortably going 15 or 20 over the
5 limit? That's because the highway is
6 designed for you to do that.

7 We post a lower speed because
8 as Chris showed, speed kills. And so,
9 we post a lower speed to manage traffic,
10 to smooth traffic flows. And because if
11 there is a crash, we want people going
12 at a lower speed. But the difference
13 between design speed and posted speed
14 forces us to constantly overrule our
15 instincts and the messaging we're
16 getting from the road. And Chris
17 mentioned how wide roads will make us go
18 faster, that's the design speed. And
19 we're trying to -- we have to fight to
20 not drive at the speed that the road is
21 designed for.

22 So let's bring this back to
23 Philadelphia's urban roads, specifically
24 one that's lower congestion because of
25 the pandemic, wide lanes and recessed

1 curbs that allow for high-speed turns
2 combined with lower congestion, it
3 encourages our drivers to drive fast.
4 Should they constantly overrule
5 themselves? Yes, but that's what we're
6 relying on for safety.

7 So to address these issues,
8 oTIS has decreased lane width, slowed
9 down traffic in select parts of the
10 City, Chris showed that map and talked
11 through some projects, Chestnut
12 Transportation Project and the 20th
13 Street to the South Street Bridge turn,
14 and these interventions are providing
15 measurable safety benefits. They're
16 slowing down traffic. They're
17 increasing the visibility of
18 pedestrians, and they're also increasing
19 mobility, right. More or more people
20 feel safe crossing Chestnut Street, for
21 example, because traffic is slower and
22 there's increased visibility.

23 Now, let's talk about traffic
24 controlled devices. Stop signs are at
25 yield signs in many sections of

1 Philadelphia. And I want you to
2 consider that you're driving on a
3 one-lane street in Bella Vista or in
4 West Philly or in lots of different
5 areas of Philadelphia, and you're
6 approaching a stop sign but there is a
7 big line of parked cars obscuring your
8 view of possible oncoming traffic. You
9 know you'll have to overshoot the stop
10 line to check for oncoming traffic. You
11 do a quick scan for pedestrians, but you
12 can't see any because those parked cars
13 are blocking your view.

14 You as a driver have to force
15 yourself to stop before the stop line.
16 It doesn't benefit you. You're not in
17 danger, right. You'll need to actually
18 overshoot the line in order to see cross
19 traffic, but you need to force yourself
20 to stop carefully just in case there's a
21 pedestrian there. But we know -- this
22 happens every single time I walk in my
23 neighborhood and maybe some of you are
24 replaying incidents like this for
25 yourself. We know that drivers will

1 simply overshoot the stop line, not
2 force themselves to anticipate
3 pedestrians. And this forces the
4 pedestrian to be on the defensive rather
5 than the driver.

6 Now, Pennsylvania Vehicle Code
7 does require that cars are not to be
8 parked within a number of feet, 20 or 30
9 feet of the curb. But no parking signs
10 are not ubiquitous nor are they
11 effective. We need to block the
12 roadway. We need to block off the
13 parking at least 20 feet leading up to
14 the curb, if not more with an
15 infrastructure intervention.

16 Pushing parking back from the
17 curb to make pedestrians more visible to
18 drivers is called daylighting.
19 Councilmember Brooks, maybe that was one
20 of the words you were thinking of.
21 Drivers will only reliably modify their
22 behaviors when the infrastructure on
23 which they operate their vehicle demands
24 through the infrastructure designs that
25 they drive slower, pay more attention

1 and see and stop for pedestrians and
2 other roadway users.

3 And so, I'm here to say that we
4 must narrow our driving lanes. Ideally
5 in some cases, this could be separated
6 cycling lanes. In some cases, this
7 could just be narrowing lanes. We need
8 to address our intersection crossings.
9 We need to block out the intersection
10 crossing and extend sidewalks into the
11 curb. These are called bump-outs. They
12 force drivers to approach and execute a
13 turn more slowly and they also increase
14 pedestrian visibility, right.

15 When I think about my 9-year-
16 olds crossing the street, I think about
17 a sidewalk that extends a bit into the
18 street so that they can wait safely on
19 the sidewalk, but be very visible to a
20 driver approaching an intersection. And
21 we need to daylight the parking, we need
22 to move the parking back from the curb
23 not just with a no parking sign, but
24 with physical interventions.

25 I'd like to say that in my

1 estimation Philadelphians want these
2 interventions, right. OTIS called for
3 applications to the Neighborhood Slow
4 Zone Program in 2019. They received
5 applications from all over the City
6 outlining interventions like the ones I
7 suggested. But because of funding, they
8 are only able to fund 7 percent of the
9 applications. It just felt like why are
10 only 7 percent of these neighborhoods
11 getting to implement safe slow zones
12 when so many more want this. It felt a
13 little like the Hunger Games, why should
14 some go without and some not. It felt
15 wrong and it felt wrong in that way.
16 And I imagined that it must have been so
17 hard as OTIS to go through these
18 applications and only know that you can
19 pick a few. That must have just been a
20 very difficult moment.

21 The problem isn't that we don't
22 want infrastructure interventions and
23 the problem is not that they are not
24 effective. It's that we aren't
25 prioritizing them. We aren't

1 prioritizing engineering and design
2 solutions. And so, if we improve our
3 infrastructure in these ways, we will
4 see fewer fatalities. We also at the
5 same time will build a city where
6 everyone feels safe walking around,
7 where children and the elderly, people
8 who are low mobility in general can move
9 around with more confidence, can move
10 around much more freely to shop, to walk
11 to work, to take their kids to the
12 playgrounds and to visit with neighbors.

13 Councilperson Brooks had posed
14 the question and was discussing why are
15 there more traffic fatalities in
16 lower-income neighborhoods. And then,
17 Councilmember Brooks, you also mentioned
18 that infrastructure looks different in
19 different parts of the City. We have
20 some of these interventions in higher
21 income parts of the City, and I would
22 argue that infrastructure and the cues
23 that infrastructure gives to our
24 drivers, particularly in some of the
25 lower-income neighborhoods doesn't force

1 attention, and that's a problem. And I
2 really think we need to walk with an eye
3 to these infrastructure and design
4 issues.

5 I want to mention that I'm here
6 to encourage everyone to prioritize
7 these long-term behavior modifying
8 engineering and design solutions. And I
9 want really want to focus on long-term
10 and consistently behavior modifying
11 engineering design solutions. There was
12 a lot of discussions of crossing guards.
13 Our crossing guard -- our Philadelphia
14 public school is wonderful and such a
15 core part of the community. But to me
16 when I see a crossing guard, it tells me
17 that we aren't willing to design our
18 streets to be safe for children to cross
19 them. And that to me is a failure, that
20 we need an adult in order to get our
21 drivers to stop rather than build out
22 infrastructure that makes it safer for
23 children to cross.

24 Crossing guards are not a
25 sustainable consistent solution. In the

1 pandemic, my children can't walk to the
2 park. They can't do that because there
3 is no crossing guard. We need to think
4 about a suite of solutions in tandem.
5 I'm not saying that we shouldn't have
6 crossing guards, but we need to think
7 about guards, enforcement and we need to
8 prioritize infrastructure solutions so
9 that we can really effectively in the
10 long-term change the way drivers drive
11 and change safety. Thank you very much
12 for your time.

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you so
14 much.

15 Member Thomas, I'm going to
16 transfer the Chair to you. But I want
17 to say something that this whole hearing
18 has made me think about. Over my time,
19 I remember the exact locations where
20 civic action was taken because of the
21 removal of a streetlight on Hunting Park
22 Avenue, CAG and RAAH, which are two
23 activist community organizations shut an
24 intersection down. When I tell you
25 buses stopped, horns honked and they

1 shut it down until they got their
2 Councilman, their Senator and their
3 State Rep. to work together to restore
4 that light.

5 Same thing happened in
6 Overbrook Park on Haverford Avenue. The
7 people from PennDOT decided it would be
8 better if they took out every other
9 traffic light in order to hasten people
10 coming from the suburbs, Member Thomas,
11 to be able to get to their jobs in
12 Center City. And they decided -- and
13 they will say that's not why, but they
14 shut the intersection down. I mean
15 total interruption of traffic flow.

16 And again, that happened in
17 Wynnefield Heights, right by the Target.
18 There is a high concentration of
19 individuals that utilize wheelchairs and
20 the stoplights were going too fast.
21 They were changing so fast that they
22 could not get across the street, and
23 they literally had wheelchair activists
24 block the intersection down.

25 Now, as I look at those areas

1 and I look at the income of those areas,
2 that speaks volumes too, that their
3 daily concerns for life trickled down to
4 traffic. There are some places in my
5 District where bullets are flying and
6 you have to duck the cars, but you also
7 have to duck the bullets too and those
8 are often conflicting priorities.

9 But I am grateful to you and
10 the members of this Committee for
11 raising the consciousness of all of us
12 so that we can make meaningful policy
13 change during the budget. So I want to
14 to thank you, Member Thomas and members
15 of this Committee, for highlighting this
16 important issue.

17 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank you,
18 Mr. Chair. We appreciate it and we
19 appreciate all you do as it relates to
20 leading the conversation around all
21 issues surrounding public safety. So
22 this is just an another example. So
23 thank you. We appreciate you.

24 To my colleagues, I know that
25 there are a couple of people queued up.

1 What I would like to do is, if we can
2 just start by -- and, Chris, I'm going
3 to go ahead and apologize to you now.
4 If we can just start by taking questions
5 for Professor Ryerson because Professor
6 Ryerson probably has about five minutes
7 of our time left literally. So if we
8 can just take a few minutes for anybody
9 who has questions for Professor Ryerson,
10 we will let her go first and then we
11 will bounce back over to Chris, if
12 that's okay with you, Chris.

13 So in the chat feature, I see
14 Councilmember Green. Did you have a
15 question for Professor Ryerson?

16 COUNCILMAN GREEN: (Muted).

17 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: You're on
18 mute, Councilman Green.

19 COUNCILMAN GREEN: The bulk of
20 my questions were for Mr. Puchalsky.
21 But, Professor Ryerson, thank you for
22 your information. I think it was very
23 enlightening about the point you made in
24 reference to the infrastructure and the
25 lack in investment in infrastructure,

1 especially in moderate to low incomes in
2 our City, which leads to the fatalities
3 that we talked about and I think that
4 highlights some of the conversation we
5 had at the beginning of this hearing, so
6 thank you for providing that
7 information.

8 Do you have any specific data
9 that you can share with the Chair that
10 can be circulated to other members of
11 the Committee that will provide some
12 additional insight in reference to the
13 lack of investment from an
14 infrastructure perspective and also not
15 only comparing Philadelphia, but other
16 cities that's been offered those same
17 trends where you've had higher
18 fatalities in communities in moderate-
19 to low-income people around the nation
20 or at least in the region that has also
21 lacked that investment infrastructure.
22 That will be helpful.

23 MS. RYERSON: Very good. Thank
24 you. Thank you very much. I do
25 certainly have data on the second point

1 that you raised. In terms of the
2 funding and the lack of investment,
3 that's something I would confer with
4 oTIS. So I wonder if, Chris or Lily,
5 you have more access to such data. And
6 thank you for prioritizing my schedule.
7 I can stay for maybe 10 more minutes. I
8 didn't mean to be so rushed.

9 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: It's no
10 problem. We're used to this on Council
11 side. So just looking at those that are
12 queued up, I don't think we have too
13 many more questions for you. I know
14 Councilmember Brooks has a comment.

15 But before you go, I do have
16 one question. So I do agree with you as
17 it relates to investment and
18 infrastructure. And I think about the
19 fact that I grew up in Oak Lane, but I
20 went to Frankford High School. So when
21 I was in high school, one of the things
22 we used to always do in a Frankford
23 neighborhood was ride our bikes.

24 And Frankford is probably one
25 of those famous neighborhoods like --

1 I'm going to go ahead and throw Nicetown
2 under the bus since Councilmember Brooks
3 is here, where it's a lot of one-way
4 streets, a lot of small one-way streets,
5 but the young people, they bike a lot
6 and there was a thing when I was younger
7 where young people would always get hit
8 by a car on their bike in Frankford
9 because they would have a lot of one-way
10 streets, but then they would have these
11 really small two-way streets too.

12 So coming into Council, one of
13 the first things I'm like is, yo, we got
14 to figure out how to bring bike lanes
15 into more neighborhoods of color so that
16 children can bike safely, and the
17 biggest pushback I got, which I
18 completely understand, is that when
19 communities of color see infrastructure
20 issues happening to the street, they
21 automatically think gentrification is
22 coming. So how do you suggest we
23 package this message if we're able to
24 see some capital investment and
25 infrastructure? How do we communicate

1 this message in a way where we're
2 trusted figures coming into
3 neighborhoods of color, looking to
4 invest in infrastructure without
5 displacing people? I just want to know
6 your thoughts on that before you get
7 ready to go because I don't think any
8 other Councilmembers had questions. And
9 then I'll let Councilmember Brooks go
10 with her comment. I apologize.

11 MS. RYERSON: It sounds like
12 what Lily at oTIS is doing every day,
13 and it's a very good important point. I
14 think that the message has to
15 continually be on safety, on how this --
16 when we take away space from the
17 vehicles, that the drivers have to
18 driver slower and we want slower
19 traffic, right.

20 So rather than being a bike
21 lane project, right, I would like to
22 think about the Chestnut Street
23 Transportation Project, it's a
24 transportation project because they
25 provided a new protected bike lane, but

1 it also made crossing safer, it also
2 slowed down traffic so that everyone
3 feels safer, right. It's really like a
4 slow streets, a slow zone. I love that
5 neighborhood slow zone title, that OTIS
6 runs. It's really about slow streets,
7 and protected bike lanes are one way to
8 get there.

9 If you have a lot of cyclists,
10 it also provides the added benefit of
11 physically separating the modes. But in
12 order to combat some of that concern
13 that this bike lane is here as a sign of
14 gentrification, I think that focusing on
15 slow streets is a good messaging. And
16 again, I think Lily does this every day
17 so I'm sure she has a lot more
18 experience.

19 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank you,
20 Professor.

21 Councilmember Brooks.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Yes, and
23 I'll be really brief. I just wanted to
24 thank Professor Ryerson for clarifying
25 the term. I may have been thinking

1 gaslighting, but I was meaning
2 daylighting. Thank you for clarifying
3 that term and I look forward to talking
4 to you more about this issue.

5 MS. RYERSON: Great. And I was
6 thinking you may already be familiar or
7 if you're not, the organization that is
8 called NATCO, which is the Organization
9 of City Transportation Officials, they
10 have a lot of really nice diagrams of
11 different traffic interventions and a
12 lot of really clear drawings and their
13 names. And so, it sounds like something
14 that you might enjoy, and you can always
15 feel free to reach out. I will be happy
16 to talk more about these interventions.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Thank you
18 so much.

19 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank you,
20 Professor. We appreciate your testimony
21 here today. We appreciate your
22 expertise and we appreciate your
23 advocacy around this issue, and I'm sure
24 that you'll be hearing from other
25 members of Council as it relates to best

1 practices and solutions moving forward.
2 So thank you for being here with us
3 today.

4 MS. RYERSON: Absolutely.
5 Thank you for having me. Please feel
6 free to reach out.

7 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank you.
8 Chair recognizes Councilman Green for
9 questions for the other side of the
10 panel.

11 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you,
12 Mr. Chair.

13 Mr. Puchalsky, I want to thank
14 you for your testimony. You provided
15 some very alarming facts in reference to
16 the increase, and your phrase crash
17 violence I think is appropriate of what
18 happened in 2020. Would you say that's
19 fundamentally tied to the lack of having
20 automated enforcement cameras here in
21 the City and only being in certain
22 locations?

23 MR. PUCHALSKY: I think it's a
24 factor. I can't say -- I want to be
25 careful. We haven't done an exhaustive

1 study. I think it's definitely the lack
2 of automated enforcement. We've gotten
3 sufficient -- we've gotten numerous
4 anecdotes that there is somewhat of a
5 breakdown in norms over the pandemic
6 about respect, respect for following the
7 traffic rules. What Megan said, like
8 she said, pulling yourself back even
9 when maybe the infrastructure is telling
10 you to do something different.

11 People have been very surprised
12 when we said that traffic crashes went
13 up. They're like, oh, I thought driving
14 went down. That's exactly it. The
15 driving went down. There was no
16 congestion to slow people down and now
17 they can go fast. So even though we
18 know that traffic is about 80 percent of
19 normal in terms of volumes, that 20
20 percent decrease from normal is enough
21 to remove the congestion so people now
22 don't have the same constraints. So I'm
23 not constrained by the traffic and maybe
24 I'm not constrained by my own internal
25 workings and I'm also not constrained by

1 an automated enforcement system. It's
2 all these -- it's a combination of
3 factors working together is my best
4 estimate of what's going on.

5 COUNCILMAN GREEN: And in other
6 jurisdictions the automated enforcement,
7 is that handled directly by the
8 municipal government or some type of
9 city-related entity?

10 MR. PUCHALSKY: I'm going to
11 say I don't know who technically gives
12 the ticket out. In our City, the
13 Parking Authority has been designated by
14 the state to deliver the system.

15 Lily, do you know in D.C. or
16 New York whether it's that arm of the
17 City government? I think in D.C. it is
18 because they're like a state and a city
19 at the same time.

20 COUNCILMAN GREEN: And then in
21 reference to a legislation that may be
22 needed at the state level, as you were
23 talking I was telling you about the work
24 I do as President of the Pennsylvania
25 Municipal League. One of the issues a

1 number of cities have raised and have
2 been raising regarding legislation in
3 the General Assembly was in reference to
4 radar and the need for those cities to
5 be able to do their own local
6 enforcement of radar because of traffic
7 issues, traffic combing, also public
8 safety issues in a number of areas, but
9 mostly it's tied to the traffic and not
10 being able to do that type of local
11 enforcement.

12 So I'm curious, what type of
13 legislative changes would you say are
14 needed at the state level to help
15 address some of the fatality crash
16 violence that you talked about?

17 MR. PUCHALSKY: Yes. Thank
18 you, Councilmember. We are the only
19 state in the entire country where local
20 police cannot use radar to manually
21 enforce traffic, the only state. It
22 just begs any explanation. There was
23 several bills in the last session that
24 didn't make it through, that we looked
25 at, that we reviewed and we thought

1 would adequately address the situation.

2 I think that's just the basics of the
3 ability.

4 What we're talking about is
5 this automated enforcement where you
6 don't need the officer there. And a
7 program of automated enforcement that
8 looks much more like the ARLE Program
9 for speed enforcement. So the locations
10 can be chosen, not by Harrisburg, but by
11 the Administration and Council.

12 COUNCILMAN GREEN: And then
13 lastly in looking at your chart, it
14 showed information how the old model was
15 focusing on behavior, do the right
16 thing, versus now it focuses more on
17 behavior but also a more balanced
18 approach of infrastructure, which I just
19 talked to the Professor about, as well
20 as vehicles. While we don't control the
21 vehicles that are being done in your
22 line of work previous to being here with
23 the City, but from the street
24 infrastructure, what are some of the
25 improvements that need to be made? And

1 I'm definitely cognizant of the
2 statements made by the Chair and the
3 Professor regarding that concerns that
4 when investments are made from road
5 infrastructure, that raises a concern
6 and question of gentrification, but what
7 are some of the investments that we can
8 be making that will help reduce this
9 crash violence that we have in our City?

10 MR. PUCHALSKY: Yeah, there's a
11 whole tool box out there. It involves
12 the language, changes, road diets, so
13 removing the number of lanes, curb
14 bump-outs, protected bike
15 infrastructure, there's a lot of pieces.

16 I think they fall, if we could,
17 into two different categories. I think
18 there's the quick intervention temporary
19 treatments, so that's paint, that's a
20 flexpost, that may be a Jersey barrier.
21 Temporary materials can be moved, if
22 necessary. And then there's the
23 permanent infrastructure. So how it
24 works in New York, they will be a
25 temporary pilot. Three to five years

1 later, they'll come back, they'll move
2 the curb line, right. They'll build the
3 islands out of concrete and I think both
4 are important.

5 We're in a budget situation.
6 We're struggling just to implement the
7 pilot materials, let alone coming back
8 in concrete and putting something in
9 both us and the neighborhood will know
10 will last, is going to look good, et
11 cetera.

12 COUNCILMAN GREEN: And I'll
13 close with this, I think one of the
14 challenges is trying to provide the
15 messaging to all communities in the City
16 of Philadelphia. I know we have the
17 Vision Zero initiative, but I'm not sure
18 if that message is penetrating in
19 various communities in the City of
20 Philadelphia.

21 I think there needs to be a
22 renewed focus on how that message is
23 delivered and the messengers for that
24 message in various communities around
25 the City of Philadelphia. I know people

1 have the concern of gentrification, but
2 I think people also have an
3 understanding that this lack of
4 infrastructure also has an impact on
5 their neighbors, their loved ones and
6 their community. By not having this
7 infrastructure investment has increased
8 the number of fatalities and crash
9 violence in moderate- to low-income
10 communities in the City of Philadelphia
11 that will possibly help to change the
12 narrative towards people being more
13 inclusive and more supportive of the
14 infrastructure items that you talked
15 about. Granted we understand that
16 finances and resources are a challenge,
17 especially in our current dynamic due to
18 the pandemic, but we still have to plan.
19 We have a capital program, which is six
20 years. We do need to plan to make the
21 investments, but I think we need to make
22 that type of messaging more apparent and
23 a more thoughtful, critical way to let
24 people know that without these types of
25 investments we're going to continue to

1 have disproportionate fatalities in
2 various communities around the City.

3 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

4 MS. REYNOLDS: May I contribute
5 some comments in response to
6 Councilmember Green's questions?

7 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Sure.
8 Please.

9 MS. REYNOLDS: Thank you. So
10 with regard to that last comment,
11 Councilmember Green, and to some of the
12 other questions that have been put
13 forward today, it just calls to memory a
14 conversation I was having actually
15 yesterday with an Indigo liaison in
16 Point Breeze neighborhood, Kim. She's
17 somebody that OTIS has been working with
18 in the Indigo program for several years
19 and is an ambassador for the Bike Share
20 program, and that model is one that OTIS
21 has found to be very successful in
22 partnering directly with community
23 members who are leaders in their
24 neighborhood and giving them both a
25 stipend, education and resources to go

1 and talk with their neighbors about the
2 benefits that they find are very useful
3 for the Indigo program. So she was
4 saying to me the things that she's done
5 in her life over the years that were
6 benefits to her and how that helped her
7 in having conversations with her
8 neighbors.

9 So I think that this is
10 something that we're continuing to try
11 to expand throughout our different
12 programs in oTIS, including with an
13 upcoming Vision Zero Youth Ambassador
14 program as well as with other
15 infrastructure projects that we are
16 working on in different communities,
17 including right now early planning in
18 Mantua, where we're working with some
19 community liaisons, again respecting and
20 understanding their time that they are
21 contributing to the work that we do, by
22 providing a small stipend to thank them
23 for their time and effort that they put
24 in to having these community
25 conversations. So I completely agree.

1 I think that that message and the
2 messenger is extremely important and
3 empowering to have community members who
4 are the same people who are coming to us
5 and asking for some of these
6 interventions and changes to be partners
7 with us on the ground.

8 And if I may, I would like to
9 add one other comment to your question
10 about the state legislation. I think
11 recognizing that this body is not the
12 body that is responsible for that. But
13 I think it's important to mention the
14 state legislation for what we call the
15 Curb Bill, which is a very important
16 piece of legislation that did not pass
17 in the last legislative session.

18 We knew that it was passed by
19 the House, but it did not pass through
20 the Senate. And this legislation is
21 really hindering our ability to be doing
22 some of the bike lane projects in the
23 City of Philadelphia. So we are not
24 able to use some of the temporary
25 materials that Chris talked like

1 flexposts to install protected,
2 sheltered bike lanes. Meaning, that
3 many of the places where we know where
4 this safe infrastructure will be useful,
5 not just to cyclists, but to people who
6 are walking and people who are driving
7 or taking transit, we are really
8 strapped because we would only be able
9 to implement them if we had the funds to
10 do full concrete and curb, which we
11 simply do not have. So we're looking
12 at -- a block could cost a certain
13 amount with the temporary materials.
14 We're looking at maybe five times that
15 amount or maybe more to do it with the
16 concrete materials. So we were very
17 disappointed to see that not passed in
18 the state legislature in the last
19 session, and we've been working with
20 other partners, including the Bike
21 Coalition who I believe is in attendance
22 to get that passed among other things,
23 as well as state legislation for local
24 control of speed limits, which is one of
25 the goals of Vision Zero as well, so

1 making sure that we're able to have
2 different methods for reducing speed
3 limits in the City of Philadelphia than
4 what we have now. Again, another area
5 where we're strapped in terms of
6 actually reducing some of the speed
7 limits which has also been proven
8 effective to reduce speeds and reduce
9 crashes and save lives.

10 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank
11 you --

12 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Just one
13 more thing, Mr. Chair.

14 I know I've worked with Mike
15 Carroll and Chris and yourself on
16 legislation locally, but I think this
17 provides an opportunity to have a
18 conversation with Rich Schuettler, our
19 President at the Pennsylvania Municipal
20 League and John Brenner, our Deputy
21 Executive Director as well as Amy
22 Sturges, our Legislative Director on
23 these issues, because I would venture
24 just like I've seen with Act 111 where a
25 number of my Executive Board members,

1 Mayors from Scranton and Lancaster and
2 Pittston in our first call with Governor
3 Wolf this issue, our first issue was Act
4 111 and we're working with
5 Representative Donna Johnson Bullock on
6 that perspective, I think this is an
7 another area where we can have some
8 synergy, because I think some of the
9 same issues in reference to crash
10 violence that we're seeing here in
11 Philadelphia is probably also some
12 challenges in Lancaster, in Scranton and
13 Harrisburg and Erie and various cities
14 around the Commonwealth, so there could
15 be some synergy to work on legislation
16 for the benefit of the City of
17 Philadelphia and other cities around the
18 Commonwealth.

19 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

20 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank you,
21 Councilmember Green.

22 Chair recognizes Councilmember
23 Gauthier. I think Councilmember
24 Gauthier was next.

25 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank

1 you, Mr. Chair. First, I wanted to
2 acknowledge your comment around this
3 issue of bike lanes, how people in
4 particularly Black communities and
5 people of color interpret that as a sign
6 of gentrification.

7 As a District Councilmember,
8 I'm excited about the opportunity to
9 engage my community in having more
10 modern streets that provide safe modes
11 of traffic for all types of transit.
12 But I also realize that this is going to
13 be a part of this conversation, right.
14 And I think that we as a City have to
15 acknowledge our part in that. So when
16 we have had neighborhoods, for example,
17 that's been asking us for a decade or
18 more for speed bumps, for stop signs,
19 for help with getting handicapped
20 spaces. And then those neighborhoods
21 perceive the City is not being
22 responsive to that, but then when
23 younger, White newer residents, there's
24 a bike lane project, that's a problem,
25 right.

1 So, one, I think we have to
2 acknowledge our level to responsiveness
3 long-term residents of color in meeting
4 the needs that they have brought to us.
5 And I think as we move forward with
6 these projects, we have to make sure
7 that we're responding effectively to
8 those needs, right, and maybe even
9 frontloading some of those improvements
10 in neighborhoods that have been crying
11 out for them for a long time.

12 And so, I would love to have
13 protected bike lanes in other parts of
14 my District. And I look forward to
15 participating in those conversations
16 even where they're difficult but I just
17 want us to make sure that we're
18 acknowledging our investment in
19 neighborhoods of color and we're making
20 sure newer and long-term residents
21 things that they want out of these
22 infrastructure projects.

23 I also wanted to acknowledge
24 Chris and Lily and thank them for their
25 work. Even in the short amount of time,

1 we've been able to do some good things
2 in the 3rd District and I look forward
3 to a continued partnership.

4 I also wanted to ask, Chris,
5 what do you need from City Council? And
6 specifically, what do you need from a
7 budget perspective?

8 MR. PUCHALSKY: Yeah. Thank
9 you for your comments, first of all.
10 It's been good to work with you and your
11 staff, whether it's on the project in
12 Mantua or Lindbergh Ave or the
13 conversations we're about to start
14 having on Walnut and Chestnut, extending
15 that infrastructure all the way to Cobbs
16 Creek. So from a budget perspective,
17 like all departments, whether operating
18 or policy proofs like ours, more
19 resources means we'll be able to do more
20 both on the capital side and the
21 operating. We need the capital to build
22 the project, but we need operating to
23 pay people like Lily or the next planner
24 or engineer to have those conversations.

25 She pointed to the

1 conversations she had yesterday. When
2 we have these long-term relationships,
3 that helps the gentrification
4 conversation go better. It doesn't get
5 rid of it. But when we've known
6 somebody for five years, it's a lot
7 better than just showing up and saying,
8 hey, we're from the government, we're
9 here to help, so it's those long-term
10 relationships.

11 And so, we both need the
12 operating to plan and design the project
13 and then the capital to build it. But
14 the City's in a budget crisis so I don't
15 want to speak out of turn. I'm sure
16 every operating department would tell
17 you what they can do with more. But to
18 straight up answer your question, the
19 budget constraints are real. And that's
20 also with the traffic calming requests
21 in the Streets Department. That's not
22 my department, but we work together.

23 A lot of times, there's a
24 backlog because they just don't want to
25 give it out because it takes staff to do

1 the study, to put it in and then at some
2 point in the year you run out of speed
3 cushions to put in, so that's real.
4 That's real. And so, we're willing to
5 take a look at how can we make that
6 program the, Traffic Calming program
7 more transparent, better, redesign the
8 parameters, making sure we got the
9 equity put in. But at the end of the
10 day, we need the resources to install
11 the traffic calming.

12 I think from a nonbudgetary
13 perspective we're working on a package
14 of safety and congestion-related things
15 called the Omnibus. It's not ready to
16 go out today. But the requirement to
17 get an ordinance for every bike lane, it
18 does help us to have real good
19 conversations, but there's also a
20 barrier. But if we can find a way that
21 we still have those good conversations
22 but without the need to go through the
23 process of an ordinance and then all the
24 other steps and then the time, that
25 could add four months into the project

1 delivery process which is sometimes
2 enough to kill a project. So I think if
3 we can take a look at, that would be
4 critical. Last, your encouragement for
5 alternate modes and this includes SEPTA,
6 everybody riding SEPTA means they're not
7 driving around. That's really
8 important, but thank you.

9 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
10 you. I will not profess to speak for
11 every District Councilmember, but I am
12 certainly willing to have the
13 conversation about how we make some of
14 this easier, particularly if we could do
15 that and streamline the process while
16 also having a robust and appropriate
17 amount of community engagement too.

18 I'll also say this is probably
19 more for Streets, but I wish there was a
20 way that we could combine some of the
21 surveying we do in response to requests
22 for traffic calming with resident
23 perspective. I found myself in
24 situations where residents are saying I
25 see this happening on a daily basis, and

1 we're going out and saying, we looked at
2 it and our data says we don't need
3 traffic calming here, there has to be a
4 way to marry that perspective in a
5 better and more equitable way as well.
6 And so, I hope that's something that we
7 will be able to figure out as a City.

8 MR. PUCHALSKY: Yes.
9 Absolutely. And that's really what's
10 behind the Neighborhood Slow Zone
11 Program, is that this a co-creation
12 process. This is like a doctor-patient
13 relationship. I hope that we're
14 experts. You should expect that we know
15 what we're talking about just like a
16 doctor is an expert about how the body
17 works. But the patient knows where it
18 hurts, you know. The neighborhood knows
19 what they see every day. When we don't
20 listen to each other, things go badly.
21 And when we take the time -- which
22 again, operating, staff time is real.
23 But when we take the time to listen to
24 each other, then I think we get to an
25 understanding and we get to the

1 infrastructure that works.

2 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
3 you.

4 And thank you, Mr. Chair.

5 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank you.
6 That was a great line of questioning,
7 Councilmember. It was definitely
8 beneficial for me as well too.

9 Chair recognizes Councilmember
10 Brooks.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Thank
12 you, Council Chair.

13 I have a few questions. I'm
14 just going to dive in. So can you say
15 more about the road design that you
16 mentioned earlier and the 10 corridors
17 that have seen investments?

18 MR. PUCHALSKY: Yeah. I will
19 turn it over to Lily. But these are 10
20 corridors that haven't seen investments,
21 but they're on a plan. These are the
22 places where we want to invest.

23 MS. REYNOLDS: That's right.
24 So the Vision Zero Capital Plan
25 identi -- it was released with the

1 Vision Zero Plan in November as a sister
2 plan to really look at some of the most
3 concerning locations that we haven't yet
4 touched mainly because they're not
5 low-hanging fruit, but they have
6 significant safety implications and
7 concerns. So we used a lot of data and
8 looked at it from many different
9 perspectives, including an equity lens,
10 looking at other upcoming projects we
11 might be able to dovetail with them to
12 select these 10 corridors and 10
13 intersections, and mainly focusing on
14 crash data as our number one priority
15 for driving these projects.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: For
17 clarity, did you prioritize the streets
18 or parts of the City that have been
19 historically kind of disinvested, where
20 our long-term residents are residing?
21 Were they a part of this conversation as
22 well?

23 MS. REYNOLDS: Yeah. So I can
24 provide more information on the specific
25 locations, but I think a majority of

1 these locations are outside of Center
2 City. Many of them are in North Philly
3 and West Philly where we see some of
4 those crash hotspots and some of the
5 equity lens that you're discussing.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Okay.
7 Because I know that we can pick places
8 in the City that used to be housed by
9 low-income residents and had more
10 residents of color and people living on
11 fixed income, kind of to what my
12 colleague Councilmember Jones mentioned
13 earlier. But like Professor Ryerson
14 mentioned earlier, these maps seem to
15 prioritize 7 percent of the
16 neighborhoods that are getting the
17 funding, the neighborhoods that are
18 already changing demographically and not
19 necessarily neighborhoods where we're
20 seeing more long-term residents that
21 have not seen the benefits of this
22 investment in their neighborhood, as I
23 think Councilmember mentioned earlier.

24 So to that point, my office is
25 happy to help identify blocks like in my

1 neighborhood and other parts of North
2 Philly that could benefit from safer
3 crosswalks and daylighting and speed
4 controls because this is something that
5 has been a great concern. And, two, I
6 think Councilmember Gauthier mentioned,
7 our neighbors feel like they're being
8 ignored by the City.

9 And I'm also concerned that
10 we're applying blanket solutions to
11 solve traffic issues that are specific
12 to each neighborhood. And how are we
13 engaging those long-term residents that
14 may be hard to reach? Are we listening
15 to their holistic perspectives at all?
16 Because I believe it's critical that we
17 approach this lens of street safety by
18 providing the residents a chance to
19 voice their concerns, specifically when
20 we talk about geographic inequity and
21 how that impacts them directly.

22 My staff feels Constituent
23 Services calls regularly, where
24 different solutions have been tried and
25 failed over the years by the City. And

1 long-term residents are calling us with
2 ideas, but they feel left out of the
3 decision-making process. And I
4 understand why they feel offended by
5 being excluded. And also, it amplifies
6 the fear that access to safe streets
7 directly correlates with gentrification
8 and we need to make sure that those
9 voices aren't excluded so we can
10 together create a better city. And I
11 just was listening to this from that
12 lens and the importance of it. And even
13 as we talk about bike safety, we talk
14 about expanding bike safety lanes, but I
15 can't think of a clear path from where I
16 live to get down to Kelly Drive to ride
17 a bike that I would trust my kids to do.
18 We did it as kids, but times were
19 different then. So I think that we need
20 to collectively come up with solutions
21 that are rooted in neighborhoods and
22 communities. And I just wanted to kind
23 of put that on the record.

24 MR. PUCHALSKY: Yeah. We agree
25 with you. We see the problem. I think

1 we actually have a meeting later this
2 afternoon, Councilmember, to talk about
3 bike lanes including where you live, and
4 we recognize there's gaps in the
5 network, not just the protected network,
6 but the regular network, so we've got to
7 address it.

8 It is a challenge to meet
9 everybody. We are learning how to do
10 that. I think that Neighborhood Slow
11 Zones, the one Megan was talking about,
12 where we are only able to -- we only had
13 funding for a very small part. Those,
14 3rd and Allegheny working up there, we
15 were working in some of the
16 lowest-income communities. And how we
17 did it, we were sitting at the table
18 with them and walking around the
19 neighborhood, partnering with local
20 community organizations like APM and
21 HACE to make sure that we were connected
22 and using engagement activities like
23 saying, listen, here's our monopoly
24 money, here's how each improvement
25 costs, here's a map of the neighborhood,

1 what do you think, where do you think
2 these should go.

3 So those kind of planning
4 exercises can take more time, but we
5 think they lead to a result where people
6 have ownership of the improvement before
7 it goes in. I don't know if I addressed
8 your question, and I don't think this
9 solution gets all the way there. I'll
10 be frank. We have a lot more work to
11 do. And it's not just oTIS. It's the
12 Streets Department too who's got a lot
13 more work to do to make sure that we're
14 well-connected with community. But I
15 can tell you we're certainly trying.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Thank you
17 for responding to that and I look
18 forward to this continued conversation
19 around just creating more safe passages,
20 as Councilmember Gauthier said, from all
21 modes of transportation. Whether we're
22 walking, driving or riding a bike,
23 people deserve to access their
24 communities in a way that's safe.

25 MR. PUCHALSKY: Yeah, we agree.

1 And please keep raising this issue.

2 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank you,
3 Councilmember Brooks.

4 As we close out this panel and
5 get ready for the next panel, just a
6 couple quick things for clarification
7 purposes. We talked about earlier this
8 idea of speeding and the fact that 41
9 percent of our traffic fatalities come
10 from speeding, but less than 1 percent
11 of the Motor Vehicle Code stops in the
12 City of Philadelphia are from speeding.
13 We also heard different testimony that
14 talked about solutions and things like
15 that.

16 I'm wondering from your
17 perspective how effective is policing as
18 it relates to how we're doing Motor
19 Vehicle Code stops as well as other
20 traffic-related issues? How effective
21 is in your opinion policing as it
22 relates to solving this problem that we
23 have of hit-and-runs?

24 MR. PUCHALSKY: Yeah. Thanks
25 for bringing that up. So about stopping

1 people for speeding, I think the point
2 that Councilman Green raised how our
3 police don't have radar, so it is nearly
4 impossible -- it is very difficult for
5 them to give a speeding ticket in the
6 City of Philadelphia. Radar is really
7 the best tool to do that. So they don't
8 even really have the tools to give a
9 speeding ticket. They've got to set up
10 two lines and use a stopwatch as if this
11 was the 1930s. Forget modern, this is
12 technology that's been around for
13 decades and they --

14 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: No, no, I
15 completely understand the technology
16 isn't there. I'm just saying speaking
17 from a solution-based perspective, in
18 your opinion is an increase in policing
19 and a stronger police presence a way to
20 address this issue?

21 MR. PUCHALSKY: Yeah. I think
22 this is a tricky issue. So I'm going to
23 go back to that chart I had where the
24 behavior change is part of it, but it's
25 only one small part of it. I don't

1 think we can throw it out the window. I
2 also think it's changing the
3 infrastructure. It's the real long-term
4 solution to the problem.

5 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank you.
6 And I just wanted to get your opinion.
7 Last thing for the record, I know one of
8 my colleagues has to leave but
9 Councilmember Gym earlier was talking
10 about the crossing guards.

11 MR. PUCHALSKY: Yes.

12 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: And we
13 talked about the budget last year.
14 Shouldn't the crossing guards now be
15 under your budget and moving between you
16 and the Managing Director's Office for
17 the record? Because earlier there was
18 some -- I don't know if there was
19 clarity as it relates to exactly where
20 crossing guards are. Can you clarify
21 that for the record, please?

22 MR. PUCHALSKY: I can try to.
23 When Councilmember Gym brought that up,
24 I sent some messages to folks in the MDO
25 who are working directly on this. That

1 is still being transferred. It's
2 finding the right home for it in the
3 MDO. OTIS currently has about 15
4 people. There are over 1,000 crossing
5 guards, so the MDO is still working on
6 finding the right fit, both in terms of
7 being able to effectively administer the
8 program and also finding a part of the
9 MDO where it's aligned in terms of the
10 mission. So it's still in process. The
11 timing is TBD, and that's the answer
12 that I have, Councilmember.

13 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: So we're
14 definitely going to have to revisit this
15 during budget season, right. And I'm
16 just going to say by the time we come
17 back to have a conversation as it
18 relates to budget season, I don't think
19 to be determined is going to be a good
20 enough response, right. We are -- and
21 I'm not even going to even do a deeper
22 dive into that, right, because we have
23 to stay focused on this hearing, but --

24 MR. PUCHALSKY: I'll make
25 sure --

1 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: But when
2 you come back, that can't be what we're
3 doing. Because now there's a certain
4 level of, I guess you could say,
5 mistrust that creates issues with the
6 public, right, because we communicated
7 to the public that we're going to do one
8 thing and now that's not happening, and
9 today it's to be determined.

10 And this is why people begin to
11 not trust government because we give
12 them the perception that something is
13 one way and then we find out in hearings
14 and through random dialogue that is not
15 the way we voted upon. So I'm not
16 blaming you, Chris. I'm not blaming
17 you, Lily. You guys have given us great
18 information. Today's focus is really on
19 hit-and-runs. But that was something
20 that came up earlier that we wanted to
21 get clarity on. And I'm just saying
22 right now that we're going to have to do
23 a deeper dive when we move into budget
24 season.

25 MR. PUCHALSKY: I'll make sure

1 to bring that back, Councilmember
2 Thomas, so we're ready to address it.
3 When I say to be determined, the move is
4 happening. It's just finding the right
5 place for it. But I'll make sure we
6 have a more -- we know to be able to
7 talk about this when the budget hearing
8 comes.

9 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank you
10 so much. We appreciate it.

11 Are there any other questions
12 for this panel? I don't see any in the
13 chat.

14 (No response.)

15 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Hearing and
16 seeing none, I want to thank you both
17 for all the work that you're doing, for
18 your collaborative effort with Council,
19 for recognizing the importance of this
20 issue through an equity lens. I also
21 want to thank Captain Overwise as well
22 as Professor -- I always say her name
23 wrong. I apologize, Professor, because
24 she gave us some great information --
25 Professor Ryanson.

1 MR. PUCHALSKY: Ryerson.

2 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: We
3 appreciate all of you for -- Ryerson,
4 thank you, Chris. We thank appreciate
5 all of you for being here and being a
6 part of this conversation. If the Clerk
7 does not mind, can you please call the
8 next panel of witnesses.

9 THE CLERK: The next two
10 witnesses are Stephanie Evans and
11 Channabel Morris.

12 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank you,
13 Madam Clerk. This is my first time
14 working with you so I appreciate your
15 support here.

16 THE CLERK: No problem. Thank
17 you.

18 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: To my
19 witnesses, please state your name for
20 the record and you may begin with your
21 testimony.

22 Stephanie, feel free to go
23 first because I see you on my screen.

24 REVEREND EVANS: Hi. My name
25 is Reverend Stephanie Evans. I want to

1 thank you all for having this panel.
2 Bear with me a second because it's a
3 little emotional for me even though it's
4 been a year. My son Robert Evan, III,
5 was hit by a hit-and-run driver January
6 25, 2020.

7 I want to say a little bit
8 about my son because he was somebody. I
9 just want to say that he was a devoted
10 son, a faithful and loving father to
11 Aloni and his fiancée Noelle,
12 intelligent, hard-working individual,
13 carpenter, entrepreneur, loyal friend,
14 avid Eagles and a sportsman. His smile
15 and intellect just lit up the room when
16 he came in. He was a man's man and a
17 very good friend. He loved playing
18 basketball and cooking for family
19 gatherings.

20 His daughter Aloni is still
21 traumatized. It's still relevant until
22 today. She's 9 -- well, she's actually
23 10 now. Her father took her to school
24 every day and he attended all her dance
25 recitals, all her performances and all

1 her events. And Robert's quote to his
2 daughter every morning was, "Don't be
3 afraid to be smart on purpose." So
4 Robert and Noelle, they routinely
5 vacationed twice a year with Aloni,
6 Noelle and him. They always vacationed
7 twice a year. My son Rob as they called
8 him was somebody and he did not deserve
9 to die.

10 On January 25th, we received a
11 phone call around 1:35 a.m. in the
12 morning, screaming, devastating call
13 that my son was lying in the street
14 dead. We weren't sure what we were
15 hearing. You know you be waking up in
16 the middle of the night, you're not sure
17 and you're not clear, especially when
18 you have a law-abiding son.

19 So his fiancée kind of
20 explained to us he was outside the 35th
21 Police District dead. So we arrived
22 there at the Broad and Champlost outside
23 the Police District. So I asked them
24 where is Robert because all we see is
25 glass and debris all over the street.

1 You can tell it had been an accident,
2 but there's no body. There's blood all
3 in the street, but there's no body.

4 So we asked some of the friends
5 that were devastated, where is Robert.
6 So they said the ambulance had taken him
7 away. My Pastor William Scott, III and
8 I and my husband went into the 35th
9 District and we asked, there was an
10 accident outside -- I don't even want to
11 use the word accident. It was an
12 incident outside of here and we're
13 looking for our son, we were told he was
14 hit by a hit-and-run driver.

15 The officer had no information.
16 Now, he got hit outside the 35th
17 District. How do you not have any
18 information and you're the police
19 station? I didn't understand that. So
20 we went from hospital to hospital -- we
21 were at Einstein -- searching for my
22 son's body. So I'm thinking maybe this
23 is not real because while we're at
24 Einstein, Temple, we're all going all
25 over the City looking for him.

1 The mortician, we contacted
2 her. Because I'm trying to make it a
3 little short because it's emotional for
4 me. She finally located him at the
5 morgue. So when she located him at the
6 morgue -- well, actually when she called
7 the morgue, they had told her they
8 couldn't check because it was too many
9 bodies in the morgue. Too many bodies
10 in the morgue. The mortician calls the
11 City morgue and you can't tell me
12 whether my son is laying up there with a
13 tag on his toe or whatever. It took her
14 two to three days to finally get a
15 response from the morgue. The morgue
16 never contacted us.

17 So my daughter and the
18 mortician got in contact. They went to
19 see his body, picked up the body, took
20 two to three days. They wouldn't allow
21 me to go to the morgue. I was
22 prohibited from going. And come to find
23 out, my son's body was mangled. Now,
24 there were two witnesses I understand.
25 The young lady who was sitting in her

1 car, she was so visibly shaken she never
2 got out of her car. She said the guy
3 was going so fast that her car shook,
4 and I think she was in shock.

5 Now, the other witness was
6 another man. He said the guy was hit so
7 hard he must be dead, it's no way he
8 survived that accident. My son had
9 parked in the middle of the street,
10 Broad Street, to get out to get
11 something to eat so he never knew what
12 hit him.

13 The mortician told us that the
14 casket had to be closed. And I was like
15 I don't understand why does the casket
16 have to be closed, so nobody would
17 actually tell me he had been mangled.
18 He hit him so hard, the guy was
19 speeding.

20 But the gist of this, what
21 scares me is the City of Philadelphia,
22 the City morgue, the 35th Street
23 District and then the detectives. Okay.
24 So the City police detectives got all
25 the information who hit my son, the car.

1 They went to the home of the young man,
2 African-American man driving a Chevy
3 Impala. The father told the detectives,
4 my son is going to turn himself in on
5 Monday, which would have been January
6 27, 2020. That didn't happen. So they
7 go back a couple months later I believe
8 in March or something. They went back,
9 the young man tells them he has a lawyer
10 and the lawyer explained to him he does
11 not have to turn himself in.

12 My daughters are in
13 communication with the detectives or
14 police periodically, so they were
15 playing phone tag because of his work
16 schedule. Evidently he works in the
17 evening or the wee hours of the night so
18 they kept missing each other, not
19 returning phone calls.

20 So my daughter finally gets in
21 touch with the detective. And he told
22 her, we have all the information, we're
23 waiting for more DNA, the young man
24 lawyered up. Those were his words,
25 "lawyered up," so we didn't make an

1 arrest. So my daughter said why not.
2 They told her because of COVID. Because
3 of COVID? Something's truly wrong with
4 that.

5 You have the young man, his
6 name. You have the car. You have his
7 address. You know it's him. You know
8 the know-how. Why is COVID an excuse to
9 arrest this young man? I really don't
10 understand. And now it's 2021. As to
11 date, there has been no arrest, but you
12 have the information.

13 And I've heard all the data.
14 I've heard everything, how it's
15 difficult to arrest somebody from I
16 think otherwise. I think a lot of the
17 presentation was excellent. But in my
18 case, you know who did it. You know the
19 car. The young man lives in Mount Airy.
20 He's eating every day with his family.

21 I'm going to a cemetery. I had
22 to bury my son. It took the mortician
23 seven days to fix my son so we could
24 view the body. So the next time I saw
25 my son he was in a casket the day before

1 his homegoing. We had to put on
2 sunglasses. We had to put on a base --
3 I wanted to bury him in a suit. We
4 couldn't. I could tell that his leg and
5 arm had been broken the way it was
6 positioned in the casket.

7 The sunglasses covered -- she
8 had to hire -- the mortician, and thank
9 God for Bartlett Funeral Home. She had
10 to hire somebody to come reconstruct my
11 son's face. And so, I just want closure
12 for granddaughter and myself. I
13 understand there's a shortage in this
14 traffic, the violations for hit-and-run.
15 I'm willing to come in and volunteer.
16 I've been working over 30 years. I
17 worked in Corporate America. Now, I
18 work for a nonprofit.

19 However, I just think in my
20 case it's an easy fix. I don't
21 understand. If it was somebody else's
22 child that was on the Council, it would
23 have been totally different because you
24 have the information. It's different
25 when they say I'm searching for the

1 driver, we don't have the car, we don't
2 have an address, we don't have a name.
3 If you have five components, who, what,
4 when, where and how, why haven't we had
5 closure to ease this pain.

6 We deserve -- our family, his
7 daughter, his fiancée which he was
8 talking about getting married this year,
9 we deserve some answers from this City.
10 And why are all the speed bumps in
11 Center City? According to the news
12 report, he got hit at 12:35. We got a
13 phone call at 1:35. So I don't
14 understand how the 35th District didn't
15 know. I don't understand how the
16 detective has become kind of lax. I
17 don't want to see anybody fired, but it
18 needs to be some improvement. I think
19 I'm right and praying around a
20 resolution for all of this. I had a lot
21 of questions, but however during this
22 presentation I got a lot of answers.

23 Now, my last thing is when are
24 you all going to make an arrest? In the
25 meantime, I sincerely want to thank

1 Councilman Isaiah Thomas. I want to
2 thank you. I want to thank your team.
3 Cassidy is her name, I won't say her
4 last name, from the University of Penn.
5 I want to thank Mitch Blacher from
6 Channel 10.

7 I want to thank you all for
8 taking the time and searching my family
9 out, because it's several families. I
10 know this pain. Every time a
11 hit-and-run come on the news I go back
12 to trauma. I'm devastated all over
13 again. I'm a Reverend. I have
14 funeralized, eulogized so many people
15 not knowing I was going to have my own
16 son, who's never been to jail, never
17 been in trouble, just the usual growths
18 in life, law-abiding citizen. He
19 stepped out the truck to get something
20 to eat with friends right across the
21 street. And this particular day, he
22 decided he was going to drive his truck
23 around Broad Street instead of walking
24 with a friend, and he died instantly.
25 He never knew what hit him. So I thank

1 God he didn't see it coming. He didn't
2 see it coming.

3 I hope I was clear. I saved
4 some of my questions because I've been
5 on here since 10:15 this morning waiting
6 to be heard. I'm praying for every
7 hit-and-run tragedy in this City. I'm
8 praying that you all pass some laws. I
9 heard about the bike lanes. I heard
10 about the cameras. And thank God for
11 those cameras, because that's how the
12 case got resolved. But why is
13 everything focused in Center City? The
14 speed bumps, the lights.

15 I live off of Roosevelt
16 Boulevard so I've seen hit-and-runs.
17 I've seen so many tragedies. I've seen
18 it with my own eyes. But when it gets
19 close to home, it takes on a whole
20 different light. This trauma, we buried
21 my son on February 5, 2020. And the
22 reason why we buried him the last day --
23 according to the law, that was the last
24 day he could go into the grave because
25 she was trying to reconstruct his face.

1 He's at Ivy Hill without a
2 headstone. The headstone been paid for,
3 for a whole year. But because of COVID,
4 it hasn't come yet. So my son is in an
5 unmarked grave in Ivy Hill cemetery. I
6 never thought I would be one of those
7 people that actually lead on September
8 15th for his birthday releasing balloons
9 and candles and praying. I never
10 thought -- I participated in so many of
11 them, but now it's me. It's us.

12 So my son's name was Robert
13 Evans, III. We called him Rob. His
14 friends called him Robo. An
15 entrepreneur, worked for different
16 hospitals, different agencies because he
17 was a carpenter, loved to cook, loved
18 family, a family man. I just want
19 closure to ease the pain as we go
20 through this. And I need answers for my
21 granddaughter. Because once a month,
22 she asks did they catch the man that hit
23 my father. And I'm like, we don't have
24 any answers yet, we're just waiting and
25 we're just praying.

1 And I just want to ask the
2 young man what happened. I just want
3 closure. That's all. And I pray that
4 you all can be helpful in this area.
5 That's it.

6 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Reverend
7 Evans, thank you for your great
8 testimony. I know firsthand your son
9 definitely was a good person. I can
10 only imagine the grief that you and the
11 rest of your family are going through.
12 And I think it's important that you
13 communicated that testimony today
14 because there are so many other people
15 in the City who are suffering who just
16 don't have the strength to come before
17 us to be able to communicate this
18 concern.

19 So you're speaking on behalf of
20 you and Robert and your family, but
21 you're speaking on behalf of a
22 demographic in the entire City who
23 just -- it's difficult for folks to do
24 this. So, Reverend Evans, thank you so
25 much. My thoughts and prayers go out to

1 your family. I do want to -- if you
2 don't mind, can you hold. We want to
3 let the next witness testify and then I
4 want to open it up for my Council
5 colleagues for questions. And I believe
6 there's a hand raised as well too.

7 The next witness, if you don't
8 mind, please state your name for the
9 record and you may begin with your
10 testimony. And again, Reverend Evans,
11 if you could stay on please, we would
12 appreciate it.

13 MS. MORRIS: Good evening,
14 everyone. My name is Channabel Latham-
15 Morris. I'm from Warwick, New York.
16 Councilman Thomas, thank you so much and
17 your City Council for having this event
18 today. I waited four years to be doing
19 this. I'm grateful for the opportunity
20 to speak in front of you. I believe
21 it's imperative that I do in order to
22 provide an understanding of how and what
23 I feel about vehicular hit-and-run
24 incidents in Philadelphia.

25 So let me share my story of

1 Jamal. My son Jamal Morris went riding
2 his bicycle at 45th and Market when he
3 was struck by a hit-and-run driver on
4 April 16, 2016. He died on April 18,
5 2016 from severe brain injury at the age
6 of 27. Upon his death, his organs and
7 tissue were donated. His heart, his
8 left and right kidney, liver and
9 pancreas and more. 50 recipients
10 received his tissues. Three months
11 after his death, we received a letter
12 from the person who received his heart.
13 Two weeks after that letter, we received
14 correspondence from the recipient of his
15 kidney and pancreas.

16 That was -- Jamal was my only
17 child. He was born November 15, 1988 in
18 Brooklyn, New York. He was a graduate
19 of Warwick Valley High School in 2006.
20 And in 2011, he received his Bachelor's
21 degree in mechanical engineering from
22 Drexel University School of Engineering.

23 During his college years, he
24 was a part-time staff member at the
25 University of Pennsylvania (inaudible).

1 He loved that place. After graduating,
2 he worked as an engineer at (inaudible)
3 and then at AMEC Foster in Philadelphia,
4 both engineering firms.

5 Jamal was an avid cyclist,
6 nothing but a bicycle. He competed in a
7 wrestling and boxing competition. He
8 played basketball, football, tennis,
9 soccer, wrestling and other sports. I
10 think his favorite sport was football.
11 He believe that in order to have a good
12 and healthy lifestyle you must take care
13 of your body. He was enthralled with
14 Rolfing. I'm not sure if you guys know
15 what that is, but he made me focus on
16 it. It's a system of soft tissue
17 manipulation and movement education that
18 organizes the whole body in gravity. He
19 believed in Rolfing. He paid out of his
20 pocket because insurance didn't pay for
21 it.

22 In addition, he played many
23 musical instruments, piano, saxophone,
24 trumpet, drums. While being a composer,
25 he enjoyed singing his works. Jamal

1 loved people. He shared his life with
2 friends and family and saw no one as
3 different. His friends loved him and
4 trusted him. At 27 years old, he lived
5 a full life. He traveled to Australia,
6 Japan, Italy, France, England and the
7 Caribbean. He was a gift to his parents
8 and his family as a whole. His presence
9 is truly missed.

10 I celebrate my son's life every
11 day. Since his passing, a foundation
12 was created in his name the Jamal C.
13 Morris Foundation. One of the main
14 goals of the foundation is send
15 deserving African-American young
16 students to Drexel University School of
17 Engineering. We need more
18 African-American engineers in America
19 and the world as a whole, and we plan to
20 accomplish this through his foundation.
21 His mantra was it's only getting better.
22 No matter what you say to Jamal, Mom,
23 it's only getting better.

24 So since Jamal's death, I have
25 never heard from the officer in charge

1 of the investigation. And I have his
2 name and I'm not even going to say his
3 name. I have called and visited the
4 person. We have placed a \$10,000 for a
5 lead on the accident. Nothing
6 materialized. I've worked with the
7 Bicycle Coalition on getting legislation
8 passed, following numerous visits to
9 Harrisburg meeting several senators. As
10 my grandmother would say, don't leave
11 any stones unturned until you make a
12 difference in life.

13 I'm a founding member of
14 Families for Safe Streets of Greater
15 Philadelphia and I intend to work as
16 hard as I can with Families for Safe
17 Streets and the Bicycle Coalition to
18 make sure that vehicular homicides are
19 reduced significantly. We need strict
20 legislation and insurance review,
21 including redlight cameras and speed
22 cameras, and we must make our leaders
23 accountable.

24 I thank you for your time. I
25 thank you for having this event today

1 and I pray that the voices of the people
2 can make a difference so that each of us
3 can drive, ride our bikes and be safe in
4 doing so. Councilman, I looked at you
5 and I see my son, and I see him 100
6 percent in you. So I thank you today.
7 I thank for your time. And it's only
8 getting better. Thank you very much.

9 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Again,
10 thank you so much for your testimony.
11 Like Reverend Evans, I can only imagine
12 how difficult it is for you to come
13 before us and communicate such painful
14 thoughts. I also want to apologize to
15 both of the families on behalf of the
16 City of Philadelphia, what you've had to
17 experience as it relates to the process
18 after you've lost your loved one, is one
19 that there is no excuse for. And all we
20 can do is hope that you highlight these
21 issues and put us in a position where we
22 can do a little bit better.

23 Do any members of Council have
24 any comments or any questions for this
25 panel?

1 (No response.)

2 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: I know it's
3 not the most easiest panel to ask
4 questions today. Before we go and move
5 on to the next -- I'm sorry. Chair
6 recognizes Councilmember Brooks.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: I just
8 want to let both panelists know that we
9 hear your stories and I am happy to be a
10 part of this hearing with my colleague
11 Councilmember Thomas and looking to work
12 as hard as possible to make sure you
13 feel and that your family receives
14 justice around this issue. So my
15 sympathies are still with you and your
16 families and I just wanted to recognize
17 that.

18 MS. MORRIS: Thank you.

19 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank you,
20 Councilmember Brooks.

21 Before we go, just two things:
22 Number one, if either witness wants to
23 add anything else to the record that you
24 feel like we need to hear, that we need
25 to know, I will open up the floor as

1 well.

2 Captain Overwise, who was
3 testifying earlier, he asked that you
4 reach out to him so we will have members
5 of our office connect you to Captain
6 Overwise. So hopefully, we can get you
7 some solutions to some of the issues
8 that was discussed today.

9 I see Captain Overwise is on
10 camera. Captain, did you want to add
11 anything to the conversation?

12 CAPTAIN OVERWISE: Yes. I
13 don't want to discuss publicly Reverend
14 Evans' case. We are this close -- let
15 me put my hand in the camera -- this
16 close. I wish we had a solution for you
17 right now, but we don't. I think the
18 COVID remark referred to the fact that
19 we're waiting on a DNA sample to get
20 processed through the lab, and the
21 pandemic may have caused a delay in
22 that. It takes a long time to begin
23 with. But I think the pandemic may have
24 caused a delay in that, and I think
25 that's where that came from.

1 But please email me and give me
2 your phone number personally, and you as
3 well, Ms. Morris, I will speak to you
4 personally as well. Email and give me
5 your phone number.

6 MS. MORRIS: Thank you.

7 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank you,
8 Captain Overwise. We appreciate it.
9 And again, I do want to apologize on
10 behalf of the City of Philadelphia
11 because it should not take a hearing for
12 you to get the response that you're
13 essentially asking for. Again, I can
14 only imagine what other narratives are
15 out there where people just don't have
16 the strength, the courage or the
17 resources to be able to come before
18 Council and wait five hours just to be
19 able to tell a 10-minute or 15-minute
20 testimony, because it means that much to
21 you and you cared that much about your
22 loved ones and getting justice for
23 something that is unfortunate that took
24 place that no one asked for is something
25 that we all should feel obligated to

1 essentially do not just for the families
2 that's testifying now, but for all the
3 victims in the City of Philadelphia who
4 have experienced some level of trauma
5 because of these unfortunate situations
6 with hit-and-runs.

7 So Reverend Evans or
8 Mrs. Morris, did you want to add
9 anything as it relates to your testimony
10 or anything else that we want to hear
11 from the record?

12 MS. MORRIS: I am praying that
13 something can be done to this. I looked
14 at the penalty for hit-and-run. It says
15 three years and \$2500. I don't know
16 what that means. Three years it says
17 and \$2500. And I think that the
18 police -- I was assigned to a person to
19 work with me and to have not been given
20 a call and say, listen, Ms. Morris, we
21 know how you are, we're reaching out,
22 we're doing everything we can. But no
23 one, I haven't heard from the officer
24 who was assigned to the case. No one
25 reached out.

1 You know a family is in pain
2 and you're assigned to a case, reach
3 out, say something. If you have to lie,
4 reach out and say, Ms. Morris, we're
5 still investigating. But just let it
6 die, I visited the person, nothing.
7 Communication is key. Somehow it makes
8 you feel better knowing that someone is
9 working on it. We gave \$10,000 for
10 information related to it and nothing.

11 Just like I buried my son and
12 it's dead. It died. And Jamal loved
13 Philadelphia. He wanted to go to no
14 other school, but to Drexel University
15 in Philadelphia, and he graduated and
16 wanted to stay there. And years later,
17 four years later, nothing. He died and
18 that's the end. But I will never let my
19 son die. I will do everything I can to
20 keep his memory alive in this world
21 regardless.

22 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank you
23 so much. We appreciate that.

24 Reverend Evans, if you wanted
25 to add anything, feel free too.

1 REVEREND EVANS: (Muted).

2 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: You're on
3 mute, Reverend Evans. I apologize.

4 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: I'm
5 actually in agreement with her. I had
6 actually wrote some notes during this
7 whole process. I don't think three
8 years is enough when you can blatantly
9 tell the detectives you do not have to
10 turn yourself in. You can blatantly
11 just drive away like nothing happened.
12 I don't think that \$2500 is enough.

13 The only reason we did not put
14 out an award because I was going to put
15 out \$5,000, because the detectives
16 already had a name, address and the
17 vehicle. That \$5,000 is going to go
18 towards my granddaughter's education.
19 My son's death is not going to be in
20 vain. I actually was trying to
21 formulate an organization Mothers of
22 Murdered Sons.

23 Vehicular homicide is still
24 murder. Because it was not a bullet, it
25 still deserves much more attention. He

1 only stepped out of his truck after work
2 to get something to eat, and now he's
3 dead. My son also went to West Chester
4 for accounting. That's how he got into
5 carpentry. He decided, I don't want to
6 do that. He ended up going to trade
7 school, just an all-around decent guy.
8 And that's why it hurts.

9 It hurts so much because he was
10 not a thug. He was a law-abiding
11 citizen. The unexpected just happened
12 to him, like how could not the City, the
13 City -- why did my daughters, both
14 college graduates, smart young ladies
15 track down detectives, the morticians
16 tracked down his body, constantly
17 calling detectives. I feel your pain
18 because the detective is playing phone
19 tag not calling back.

20 I'm like you, communication is
21 the key. If you can only say, listen,
22 I'm still working on the case. I'm
23 still waiting on the DNA, some type of
24 communication to let us know it's a
25 glimpse of hope. My son's life meant

1 something to so many people. I'm not
2 going to let him die in vain. And if I
3 need to volunteer at the traffic people
4 for technology, all these street things
5 they're trying to implicate and getting
6 things to happen, you know, ask for
7 volunteers. Just train them.

8 Like you talked about training,
9 train some of these families that's been
10 hit by tragedy. I'm quite sure it's
11 some qualified families that's been
12 traumatized that's willing to come in
13 if the money isn't all there. Don't
14 leave us out. Don't count us out. Ask
15 us would we like to be a part of the
16 change. So when it happens to somebody
17 else, we can say, listen, help is here.
18 We feel your pain. That's all I'm
19 saying.

20 But God bless you, Councilman,
21 Council and Councilwoman Brooks, for
22 staying on. Just thank you all. This
23 was a great help, believe it or not.
24 You may not think so. But this is the
25 beginning, so thank you.

1 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank you,
2 Reverend Evans. We appreciate it. And
3 again, thank you, Ms. Morris as well
4 too. Very heart-wrenching testimony.
5 And, Reverend Evans, if you decide to
6 start that organization Mothers of
7 Murdered Sons, please feel free to reach
8 out to our offices so we can help you
9 get that off the ground. Because like
10 you said and like it's been said so many
11 times, I'm sure that you're not just
12 speaking for your family and your loved
13 ones, you're speaking for constituents
14 all across the City who just didn't have
15 the ability to be here today to
16 communicate this to us. So thank you so
17 much. We appreciate your testimony.

18 If the Clerk could please call
19 the next panel of witnesses.

20 THE CLERK: The next panel is
21 Brendan Flynn and Randy LoBasso.

22 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank you
23 both for being here. We apologize for
24 the delay. This has definitely been a
25 very long hearing, so we appreciate you

1 being patient. But it's also clearly an
2 important conversation that we
3 absolutely have to have. So feel free
4 to state your name and begin with your
5 testimony.

6 Brendan, if you don't mind, you
7 can go first, followed by Randy and then
8 we'll open it up for questions.

9 MR. FLYNN: Absolutely. Can
10 everyone hear me?

11 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: We can hear
12 you. It's a little static, but we can
13 hear you.

14 MR. FLYNN: I'm connected
15 through my phone, so that might be
16 the -- but I'll just make sure that I
17 speak loudly and clearly. Mr. Chair and
18 members of the Committee, my name's
19 Brendan Flynn. I'm an Assistant
20 District Attorney here in the City and
21 County of the City of Philadelphia since
22 November of 2016.

23 I am currently in the Homicide
24 and Nonfatal shootings Unit at the
25 District Attorney's Office, where I

1 oversee the investigation, charging and
2 prosecution of vehicular homicide here
3 in the City and County. I'm honored to
4 be here today in front of this Committee
5 to discuss the role that prosecutors
6 here in the City and across the
7 Commonwealth play in addressing this
8 serious problem, the problem of
9 hit-and-run accidents, also known as
10 leaving-the-scene accidents.

11 I'll discuss the law, kind of
12 piggybacking off a little bit of what
13 Captain Overwise talked about earlier,
14 but a prosecutor's perspective and I'll
15 specifically focus on the cases that I
16 handle which are the cases where a
17 fatality has occurred.

18 So as Captain Overwise talked
19 about earlier, the standard charge we
20 talk about when we talk about a
21 leaving-the-scene accident is found at
22 Title 75 Section 3742 under what the
23 somewhat innocuous sounding title of,
24 accident involving death of personal
25 injury. And I placed the language in my

1 written testimony. I won't go through
2 the actual statute, but essentially what
3 it means is if you are involved in an
4 accident where a personal injury or
5 death has happened, you have to stay at
6 the scene in order to provide
7 information and in order to render aid.

8 So as we've discussed -- as
9 Captain Overwise mentioned previously,
10 that carries a mandatory minimum
11 sentence of incarceration of three
12 years. It's a felony of the second
13 degree. Meaning, the max that someone
14 can be sentenced to on that is 10 years.
15 So you could potentially get a sentence
16 of 5 to 10 years. It's also important
17 to note that neither a sentencing judge
18 nor the prosecutor can demandatorize
19 that sentence. So if someone is found
20 guilty of an accident involving death or
21 personal injury where a death occurred,
22 you're required to serve at least three
23 years incarceration.

24 We must show that the defendant
25 in this case was either criminally

1 negligent or reckless and that they knew
2 or should have known that a personal
3 injury or a death occurred as they're
4 leaving the scene. There's also
5 additional charges that someone who
6 causes a death and leaves a scene could
7 be responsible for, that would be
8 homicide by vehicle or involuntary
9 manslaughter as well as recklessly
10 endangering another person. So if a
11 defendant is found guilty of all of the
12 above charges including accident
13 involving death, they could face
14 potentially 22 to 44 years
15 incarceration.

16 Now, in addition and I was
17 really happy to hear -- not happy, it
18 was moving for me to hear Reverend
19 Evans' testimony. And she specifically
20 mentioned something along the lines of
21 this is considered murder. And in some
22 cases, a case where a defendant leaves
23 the scene can be charged as a murder, as
24 third degree murder, which is -- these
25 are under certain circumstances where,

1 for example, essentially the
2 Commonwealth we would have to show
3 sustained recklessness, if a defendant
4 was drag-racing at high speeds with
5 another driver, if a defendant
6 disregarded multiple red lights leading
7 up to an accident or a crash that
8 resulted in a death, if the defendant
9 was fleeing from law enforcement or if
10 the evidence shows that a defendant was
11 disregarding repeated warnings to slow
12 down from a passenger or something along
13 those lines, the defendant can be
14 charged with third degree murder. That
15 is a maximum sentence of 20 to 40 years,
16 and that in addition to the other
17 charges, you can be charged with third
18 degree murder and leaving the scene and
19 homicide by vehicle and involuntary
20 manslaughter. And if the defendant
21 leaves the scene, that is a factor in
22 considering whether third degree murder
23 is applicable in this case.

24 And I'll just note -- well,
25 actually Captain Overwise covered that.

1 So I'm just going to focus a little bit
2 on some of the case numbers that I've
3 seen. And these numbers are slightly
4 different than Captain Overwise's
5 numbers because these numbers are based
6 off of our tally internally, the DA's
7 Office. It's based off of the reports
8 that we get from the Police Department
9 at the time of the initial incident, so
10 there's a little bit of a difference.

11 And in addition, these numbers
12 do not include crashes investigated by
13 the Pennsylvania State Police, which
14 they have responsibility over crashes
15 that take place on 76, on 95 and on the
16 Vine Street Expressway. So these
17 unofficial numbers are instructive. My
18 numbers show that there were 114
19 automobile crashes investigated by AID,
20 resulted in a fatality in 2020. Very
21 similar to Captain Overwise's numbers.

22 Note, however, some of these
23 cases will not result in criminal
24 charges. If a suspect is not acting in
25 a reckless manner, it could just be a

1 tragic accident. And the person could
2 potentially be held civilly liable, but
3 is not going to be criminally liable.

4 Now, often cases where someone
5 leaves the scene, that will more likely
6 be a case where there's criminally
7 liability. So in any event, 26 of those
8 114 according to our tallies are
9 leaving-the-scene crashes, either by
10 driving their vehicle away or leaving on
11 foot. And of those 26, I have current
12 active charges, meaning not only has
13 there been an arrest warrant issued, but
14 there's also been an arrest made in 5 of
15 those 26, so that's just under 20
16 percent.

17 I will also note that
18 investigations remain ongoing. And
19 according to my unofficial numbers,
20 there were 8 leaving-the-scene crashes
21 in the fourth quarter of 2020 in just
22 October, November, December. So that
23 seems to me a lot in just one quarter.
24 So they do remain ongoing. I work
25 cooperatively with the AID investigators

1 to make sure that we have cases that are
2 strong, that we'll be able to take to
3 court to either result in a plea or a
4 guilty verdict at trial.

5 And in closing, I wanted to
6 note and I think the two witnesses on
7 the prior panel really underscore this,
8 that each and every one of these
9 incidents is just an enormous tragedy.
10 And we can never forget that behind each
11 of these numbers are people. The
12 victims themselves as well as the family
13 members and friends that they leave
14 behind. Nothing we do can bring these
15 loved ones back to them. They will feel
16 this loss deeply and profoundly for the
17 rest of their lives.

18 But what we at the DA's Office
19 and in law enforcement can do is fight
20 every day to ensure that those
21 responsible are brought to justice and
22 held accountable for their actions.
23 That's what I'm committed to doing. And
24 I know that the men and women in law
25 enforcement and AID and the State Police

1 are committed to doing so as well. So
2 thank you for giving me the time and
3 opportunity to testify today.

4 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank you,
5 Brendan.

6 Randy, would you please state
7 your name for the record and communicate
8 your testimony.

9 MR. LoBASSO: Sure. Randy
10 LoBasso, the Policy Director of the
11 Bicycle Coalition of Greater
12 Philadelphia. So thanks for having me
13 today. I just first want to thank you,
14 especially for including my friend
15 Channabel Morris and Reverend Evans, who
16 I haven't had the pleasure of meeting
17 before. But as I think as everyone here
18 knows their testimony was extremely
19 important and obviously gets to the
20 heart of why we're here today.

21 So I'm going to go through my
22 testimony. A lot of it's going to be
23 repeating what you've already heard but
24 I'm just going to state it all for the
25 record. So since 2016, the Bicycle

1 Coalition of Greater Philadelphia has
2 been keeping a public online database of
3 all traffic fatalities in the City of
4 Philadelphia. This has been done as
5 part of our Vision Zero work to help the
6 public understand where crashes are
7 happening, and more importantly, the
8 lives that were ended in these crashes
9 and the families they impacted.

10 The people who've lost their
11 lives, whether they are acknowledged in
12 the Philadelphia media or not, are
13 acknowledged on our website
14 phltrafficvictims.org. And while we've
15 seen some progress in the number of
16 deadly crashes over the last few years,
17 obviously last year was extremely bad,
18 especially involving fatal crashes and
19 hit-and-runs. So the 2020 statistics
20 are pretty staggering when compared to a
21 normal Philly year.

22 Deadly hit-and-runs doubled in
23 2020 over 2019. Overall deaths rose
24 more than 70 percent. In total, our
25 initial preliminary numbers found that

1 is 153 people were killed in motor
2 vehicle traffic compared in 2020,
3 compared with about 90 in 2019. We are
4 getting our numbers both from the
5 Philadelphia Police and through media
6 reports. 34 of those deaths were the
7 result of a hit-and-run, which is at
8 least the most hit-and-run deaths since
9 we've been keeping track of crashes.
10 This is concerning and for countless
11 families around the City obviously very
12 heartbreaking.

13 There are more unfortunate
14 factors at play here, though. Data show
15 that people in low-income areas of
16 Philadelphia --

17 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: I'm sorry.
18 I hate to interrupt you. But just for a
19 quick moment of clarity, what was that
20 number you said of hit-and-run deaths in
21 2020 that you have?

22 MR. LoBASSO: I have 34.

23 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Really.
24 Okay. I definitely want to come back to
25 that point. I thought I heard you

1 correctly. Okay. Thank you.

2 MR. LoBASSO: Yeah. So data
3 show that people of low-income areas of
4 Philadelphia are more likely to be the
5 victims of traffic violence, hit-and-run
6 and nonhit-and-runs. And most of the
7 roads that kill people are wide
8 PennDOT-owned roads and allow drivers to
9 gain speeds that are not advisable or
10 legal as we have heard before today.

11 I'm mentioning all traffic
12 crashes here and not just hit-and-runs
13 because I don't believe you can
14 necessarily teach a person empathy to
15 stay at the scene of a crash if their
16 first inclination is to take off. I
17 also don't believe that increased police
18 enforcement is realistic or will help
19 solve this issue. But what is realistic
20 is changing our streets in such a way
21 that these sort of incidents don't
22 happen in the first place.

23 It's for these reasons that the
24 Bicycle Coalition of Greater
25 Philadelphia helped organize a local

1 chapter of Families for Safe Streets in
2 recent years. Families for Safe Streets
3 is an organization made up of families
4 of traffic violence and they use their
5 voices to help make our streets safer
6 for everyone, and Channabel who you
7 heard from is a co-founder of that
8 group.

9 So in 2017, the Bicycle
10 Coalition teamed up with another
11 co-founder of that group Latanya Byrd,
12 to advocate in the State capital for an
13 automated speed enforcement bill to make
14 Roosevelt Boulevard specifically safer.

15 Latanya's family had in 2013
16 been the victims of an unspeakable
17 tragedy on the Boulevard when she lost
18 her niece Samara Banks and three of
19 Banks' children Saa'mir, Saa'sean and
20 Saa'deem. The automated enforcement
21 legislation was passed in legislature
22 and then by City Council, and the
23 cameras were turned on last year. So
24 automated speed enforcement around the
25 world has shown to curb traffic

1 violence.

2 And while we currently have
3 less than a year of data available on
4 our current project, it seems to be
5 making a difference on Roosevelt
6 Boulevard. While there are still way
7 too many deadly crashes on Roosevelt
8 Boulevard in 2020, those crashes
9 according to our data represent about 7
10 percent of all deadly crashes in the
11 City. Whereas before the speed cameras,
12 specifically in 2018, Roosevelt
13 Boulevard accounted for up to 20 percent
14 of all deadly crashes. So while we
15 can't necessarily say that was the main
16 cause, it does look promising down the
17 line.

18 The Bicycle Coalition has also
19 long advocated reengineering streets
20 with safety in mind. I'm sure everyone
21 here is familiar with our stance on
22 unprotected bike lanes, and the
23 increased safety of well-designed bike
24 lanes can provide to citizens using the
25 street in a car, on foot and on a bike.

1 With our many more examples of
2 changes that can be to a street, that
3 City Council, the state legislature and
4 the Mayor and Administration should
5 consider in response to this public
6 health crisis: The first should be
7 expansion of that aforementioned
8 automated speed enforcement pilot in the
9 state legislature. Speed as you heard
10 from oTIS is the number one factor in
11 whether a person involved in a crash
12 will live or die.

13 We can't stop all crashes
14 overnight, but we can give the victims
15 of crashes a better chance at survival.
16 And I understand that City Council does
17 not have a voice necessarily in the
18 state legislature, but it's important
19 the legislature understands the problems
20 we are up against here and your
21 collective voice on this issue can help
22 make a difference.

23 As far as the expansion of
24 automated speed enforcement program is
25 concerned, I think an easy ask to the

1 state legislature from City Council will
2 be to expand it into school zones and
3 potentially the high energy network as
4 we've seen before, the 12 percent of
5 City streets where 80 of deadly crashes
6 are happening.

7 However, I'd like to point out
8 the obvious, which is that those who use
9 the roads most are the most likely to
10 get tickets for speeding by these
11 automated enforcement camera, and those
12 who live near by those roads where the
13 cameras are, are probably the most
14 likely to use them, to use those roads.

15 And there are commonalities of
16 Philadelphia's deadliest roads that we
17 have to keep in mind. The main issues
18 there are they were poorly designed,
19 large arterials mostly through
20 low-income neighborhoods. Many of those
21 roads were designed during the
22 mid-century urban renewal process and
23 were designed to give people in the
24 suburbs easy fast access in and out of
25 the City.

1 Neighborhoods have since been
2 built up around these roads, mostly in
3 North, Northeast and Southwest
4 Philadelphia. It's important to note
5 that the poor design of these roads is
6 not the fault of the residents in those
7 neighborhoods. They are the victims of
8 poor inequitable design. The
9 pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists
10 who have died while using these roads
11 and their families have suffered because
12 of poor City planning that did not have
13 them in mind in the first place. And
14 for that reason, I think it's important
15 first that Philadelphia move toward an
16 automated speed enforcement approach
17 that encompasses the entire City.

18 This I feel is the only
19 equitable way to bring down traffic
20 deaths using this technology
21 specifically. The Roosevelt Project was
22 a much-needed band-aid for
23 Philadelphia's most dangerous road. But
24 in the future we need to expand this
25 technology for the safety of everyone.

1 We also must understand that
2 speed cameras are not a long-term
3 solution. They are a temporary tool
4 that we can use on our streets until
5 that street is redesigned according to
6 proven standards. So second, the
7 Administration and the City Council need
8 to reprioritize the engineering of our
9 most dangerous roads.

10 Thanks to the work of the
11 Office of Transportation, Infrastructure
12 and Sustainability we know where these
13 deadly crashes are taking place. We
14 know what needs to be done to the
15 physical environment to curb this
16 problem. The City's complete Streets
17 Guide also provides details to
18 understand the options available for
19 different kinds of streets in the City.

20 So reengineering is a long-term
21 solution out of the situation I think we
22 currently find ourselves in. I know,
23 and this has been discussed, not all
24 engineering changes are popular,
25 especially upon first glance for a

1 variety of reasons. The popularity of a
2 a particular project should of course be
3 considered and neighbors should have a
4 say in how their project is installed in
5 their community. But it's important to
6 put high consideration on the lives that
7 have been lost to traffic violence and
8 those that will be lost in the future if
9 nothing is done.

10 I remember when we started
11 counting the number of fatalities in
12 Philadelphia, it was the beginning of
13 2017. I had looked at the numbers
14 historically. And it was January 1,
15 2017, I said to myself by the end of
16 this year about 100 people will not be
17 living in Philadelphia anymore because
18 of this issue, and it's just horrible to
19 think about it but it's the reality. So
20 we have to consider these 100 people
21 that are being killed every year and
22 last year, obviously much, much worse.

23 So lastly, although I know we
24 are in the midst of a budget crisis, I
25 would implore City Council to consider

1 restoring funds to Vision Zero and the
2 complete Streets activities that were
3 previously cut. The increased traffic
4 violence reinforces that Philadelphia
5 has an even more compelling reason to
6 address its high per capita fatality
7 rate and continue to work towards 0
8 deaths by 2030, one of Mayor's Kenney's
9 high profile commitments when he took
10 office in 2015.

11 So I know Chris Puchalsky sort
12 of got into this, but I'm going to sort
13 of look at the numbers that were cut and
14 what I think needs to be restored. So
15 as Fiscal Year 2022 budget begins to be
16 shaped, I think the Kenney
17 Administration and City Council should
18 consider the following to help curb the
19 increase in vehicular deaths. Number
20 one, add \$1 million to the Vision Zero
21 maintenance line item to pay for
22 supplies for Vision Zero maintenance
23 crew uses. And I can be more specific
24 about what that means later on if you
25 have any questions. Restore \$25,000 to

1 oTIS to conduct Vision Zero planning and
2 design projects. Restore \$2 million to
3 Vision Zero in the Streets Department
4 capital budget, and maintain staffing
5 levels in oTIS and the Streets
6 Department to carry out the 2025 Vision
7 Zero Action Plan.

8 And I understand that that's a
9 lot and I know everyone's asking for
10 these things, some more specifically
11 than others. But I think as a
12 nonofficial person, nonmember of
13 government, I can kind of draw that out
14 there. So like I said earlier, you
15 can't really rely on everyone to have
16 empathy when a crash takes place, nor
17 can you cover this problem with
18 stepped-up police enforcement. But you
19 can rely on safe engineering standards,
20 and that should be the focus of the work
21 around the hit-and-run epidemic. So
22 thank you very much for having me.

23 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank you
24 both for your testimony. I greatly
25 appreciate it. Thank you for your

1 patience as well too. I know that this
2 has been a long hearing and an emotional
3 roller coaster. And more importantly,
4 thank you for your solution-based
5 initiatives, both offering
6 recommendations and suggestions that I
7 think we should consider.

8 Of course, you submitted
9 written testimony as well too, so you
10 can definitely assure that my office as
11 well as other members of Council will be
12 following up to put us in a position
13 where we can continue to brainstorm.
14 Because it seems like just after
15 listening today, the biggest thing that
16 we need to do is capital investment and
17 infrastructure.

18 We have other solutions as far
19 as band-aids, cameras and things that we
20 feel like that can be a temporary
21 solution for right now. But it seems
22 like the direction that we need to go in
23 based on all the testimony and all of us
24 acknowledging that this a serious crisis
25 is capital investment and

1 infrastructure. I think that's the
2 common theme that we've heard from all
3 the experts across the board as it
4 relates to mechanisms and ways that we
5 can move forward to create systemic and
6 permanent change.

7 So before we close out, if any
8 of you want to add anything or comment
9 on that, please feel free to add that to
10 the record. And then we have to
11 transition to public comment.

12 MR. FLYNN: Councilmember, I
13 would just say the old saying goes, an
14 ounce of prevention is worth a pound of
15 cure. So I think that makes a lot of
16 sense. And I would note that I think
17 cameras do play a role, particularly on
18 my side of the house in terms of holding
19 people accountable after they have done
20 something where somebody has been
21 killed.

22 I will specifically note that
23 in the area of Temple University, the
24 cameras that Temple University has,
25 specifically related to Broad Street,

1 North Broad Street, that area, they've
2 been invaluable in having successful
3 prosecutions in a number of recent
4 cases. So I will just note that, and I
5 really appreciate the time to testify
6 today.

7 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank you.
8 Thank you for being here. I don't know
9 if you wanted to add anything, Randy.
10 But if not, I will pass it to the Clerk
11 so she can transition us to the next
12 part of the meeting today.

13 MR. LoBASSO: No --

14 THE CLERK: We have three --
15 oh, I'm sorry, Randy.

16 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank you
17 both. We appreciate your testimony. We
18 look forward to working with both
19 parties so we can collectively
20 brainstorm on how do we really look to
21 try to bring some systematic change. So
22 thank you for being here. Thank you for
23 your patience. And most importantly,
24 thank you for your tireless work on this
25 important and crucial issue. We

1 appreciate it.

2 Madam Clerk -- I'm sorry.

3 Colleagues, is there any other member of
4 Council who would like to comment on
5 this panel or on this bill?

6 (No response.)

7 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Hearing
8 none, Madam Clerk, can you please call
9 the set of witnesses.

10 THE CLERK: Yes. We have three
11 people signed up for public comment.
12 Emma Young, Suzannah Hall Maynard and
13 Amelia Rothermel who needs to be
14 connected by phone. But I believe Emma
15 and Sue are already connected.

16 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Awesome.
17 Great. So, Madam Clerk, if you don't
18 mind, can I call the first witnesses to
19 testify while we get the third
20 connected?

21 THE CLERK: Absolutely. Yes.

22 MS. ROTHERMEL: Hello?

23 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Yes.
24 Please state your name for the record
25 and you may begin your testimony.

1 MR. ROTHERMEL: Hi. My name's
2 Amelia Rothermel. Good afternoon. My
3 name's Amelia Rothermel. I'm a senior
4 criminal justice student at Temple
5 University with a focus in law and
6 criminal science. In my time as an
7 undergrad, I've spent several years
8 learning about the issues in our
9 criminal justice with management of
10 vehicular accidents.

11 On the police reporting,
12 judicial review of the political side on
13 the issue, we have not done enough. I
14 want to take the time today to thank
15 Councilman Thomas for holding this
16 hearing to address the needs for
17 education for surrounding the hit-and-
18 run issue. That's it.

19 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank you.
20 That was quick. Thank you. We
21 appreciate it. Thank you for your
22 patience as well too and thank you for
23 your passion around this issue. We
24 appreciate it.

25 MS. ROTHERMEL: Of course.

1 Thank you so much.

2 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank you.

3 Madam Clerk, can you please call the
4 next witness.

5 THE CLERK: Emma Young.

6 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Please
7 state your name for the record and you
8 may begin with your testimony.

9 MS. YOUNG: I'm Emma Young.

10 Hi. I'm Emma. I'm a junior at Drexel
11 University, majoring in civil
12 engineering with a focus on
13 transportation and traffic engineering.
14 I want to thank Councilman Thomas for
15 organizing this hearing to address the
16 growing problem of hit-and-runs.

17 As a student, I'm learning
18 firsthand about the infrastructural and
19 systematic issues that surround hit-and-
20 run cases in Philadelphia and I'm proud
21 to know that Councilman is shedding more
22 light on this terrible problem. I can
23 use this information I learned today to
24 stop hit-and-runs from happening in the
25 future through extensive studies and

1 designs in my future career.

2 I want to thank Councilman
3 Thomas for again championing this cause
4 and helping to change the lives of
5 Philadelphians residents for the better.
6 Thank you.

7 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank you
8 so much for your testimony. We
9 appreciate it. We appreciate your
10 advocacy as well too. Thank you.

11 MS. YOUNG: Thank you.

12 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Madam
13 Clerk, can you please call the next
14 witness.

15 THE CLERK: Suzannah Hall
16 Maynard.

17 MS. HALL: Hi. My name is Sue
18 Hall and I'm calling -- so I worked for
19 four years on the Spinal Cord Injury
20 Unit at MossRehab and I first saw
21 firsthand the devastating effects of
22 nonfatal car crashes. A spinal cord
23 injury takes a person's independence in
24 all aspects of everyday life, from
25 washing and dressing to eating and

1 drinking, to managing bowel and bladder
2 activities. The effects on the victim
3 and the family cannot be overstated.

4 People need to move or renovate
5 their homes so that they can be
6 accessible. Incomes disappear because
7 the victim can't work anymore and the
8 family has to care for them. Costs of
9 living increase dramatically. I also
10 spent time on the Brain Injury Unit
11 there. And I'll never forget there was
12 this handsome young Ivy League student
13 who was the victim of a hit-and-run, and
14 his hospital room was covered with
15 posters that his lacrosse team had made
16 for him, and he didn't recognize his
17 parents anymore.

18 But on the subject of cost that
19 I mentioned a minute ago, one
20 consequence of a hit-and-run is the lack
21 of insurance coverage from the
22 responsible party. And this can make a
23 real difference for the victim and their
24 family. Things like adult diapers and
25 wipes, catheter kits that are easier to

1 use, let alone home nursing are not
2 fully covered by insurance, or at least
3 not to the level that the person could
4 actually use and supplemental coverage
5 could make all the difference in
6 smoothing those things out, but in a
7 hit-and-run you just got what you've
8 got.

9 And also on the insurance
10 coverage side, I currently work in an
11 urgent care setting as a
12 nurse-practitioner. And I also wanted
13 to mention the number of people I see on
14 a day-to-day basis for driver's permit
15 physicals. And I was shocked when I
16 realized how many of them have driven
17 themselves to their visit.

18 So I used to work in a
19 pediatric office and I would greet
20 patients at these visits with a
21 friendly, hey, so you're ready to drive.
22 And I had to change my approach to that
23 because I realized how often here I
24 would get a sort of uncomfortable look
25 and a little like, well, legally as a

1 response. So I'm really, really glad
2 that City Council is taking a look at
3 this. Thanks again.

4 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank you
5 so much for your testimony. We
6 appreciate it. And we appreciate your
7 work and your expertise as it relates to
8 this area as well as the people that you
9 are working with on a consistent basis.
10 So thank you. Thank you so much.

11 Madam Clerk, would you please
12 call the next witness.

13 THE CLERK: There are no other
14 members signed up for public comment
15 today.

16 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank you,
17 Madam Clerk.

18 So are there any other members
19 of Council who would like to comment on
20 this resolution?

21 (No response.)

22 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Hearing
23 none, I want to thank all the panel of
24 witnesses for your participation today.
25 We value your opinion. This concludes

1 the business before the Committee of
2 Public Safety today. I want to say
3 thank you to all of my colleagues as
4 well as our Chair, Councilmember Jones,
5 as well as my partner Clerk for the day,
6 Samantha, I appreciate you, and all of
7 my staff, the Tech staff and the staff
8 involved in this to make this happen and
9 to highlight such an important
10 conversation.

11 And most importantly, thank you
12 to the victims and the families who took
13 the time to share their narratives and
14 their stories. All the facts and all
15 the experts were great, but I feel like
16 myself and a lot of the people who were
17 able to hear the testimony today, what
18 will remain with us the longest is the
19 pain from the families who talked about
20 suffering and being victims from these
21 unfortunate situations. So thank you,
22 everybody. This concludes our business
23 for the day. Have a good rest of the
24 day.

25 (Committee on Public Safety

1 concluded at 1:50 p.m.)

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

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2
3 I, hereby certify that the
4 proceedings and evidence noted are contained
5 fully and accurately in the stenographic
6 notes taken by me in the foregoing matter,
7 and this is a correct transcript of the
8 same.
9

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13 TANEHA C. CARROLL
14 Court Reporter - Notary Public
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Committee on Public Safety
February 24, 2021

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