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FROM COUNCIL MEMBER

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Spring 2010 News Bulletin

Rosie Testifies at MTA Hearing Against Plans to Eliminate Student Metrocards, Reduce Access-a-Ride Services and Cut Bus/Train Service: On March 4th, Rosie appeared before the MTA testifying in opposition to the Agency's proposed plan to cut \$40 million of services provided by Access-a-Ride, eliminating the Student MetroCards, and imposing unsustainable cuts to many bus lines and subway services. Rosie singled out and strongly opposed the proposal to eliminate overnight and weekend service on the M8 bus which serves the East and West Village. Cuts to the M8 would provide no accessible alternative for the elderly, disabled and school children who ride the buses in disproportionate numbers. She noted that the eastern portion of the area served by the M8 is more than a half mile away from any subway entrance.

Rosie testified that the elimination of Student MetroCards will directly impact student attendance and increase the drop-out rate and added that this cut would ultimately affect school funding. Furthermore, Rosie strongly believes that service cuts discourage riders from utilizing routes, and less ridership reflects poorly on bus routes, rendering them vulnerable for further cuts. Rosie stated that this vicious cycle contradicts the goals of PlaNYC - to reduce cars and increase public transit usage and urged the MTA to work toward a more sustainable plan. Rosie believes that the economic and ecological future of this city depends on emphasizing mass transit and that it is unjust to impose drastic service reductions to a public system that benefits the neediest New Yorkers.

Rosie Supports Continued Review of the Co-Location at PS 188: Rosie joined Lower East Side parents at a press conference on March 29th announcing the filing of a formal complaint to the State Department of Education regarding plans for the expansion of Girls Preparatory Charter School's ("Girls Prep") within the PS 188 building. The parents, with the legal assistance of Advocates for Children, a non-profit advocacy group, claim that the city's educational impact statement failed to consider the affect on special education students. The state has the power to halt to the plans until a more thorough review can be completed.

On February 24th the DOE's Public Education Panel (PEP) approved the expansion of Girls Prep from grades K-5 to grades K-8, which would have impacted both PS 188 and more seriously PS 94M, a special needs school which educates mostly autistic students. As part of the proposal, PS 94M would shrink, losing its 4th and 5th grades, and consolidating from 7 rooms to 5. Rosie has continually argued that DOE's assessment that there is underutilized space in the building is flawed and unfair and comes at the expense of the most vulnerable children.

Testimony Before the Public Housing Committee on the Mixed-Finance Modernization Plan and Council Passes Resolution: On March 1st, the Committee on Public Housing, chaired by Rosie conducted an oversight hearing on the New York City Housing Authority's (NYCHA) plan to federalize 21 developments (including one building in Rosie's district – 344 E. 28th St.) which do not currently receive HUD operating funds. The Committee passed a resolution in support of a bill pending in Albany which is necessary before the federalization plan can be finalized.

NYCHA will federalize these units through a mechanism called the Mixed-Finance Modernization Plan, a financing scheme that combines federal stimulus and private funds to renovate these long neglected properties. Under the terms of the Obama Administration's Stimulus Program, public housing units can be federalized if they are renovated and brought up to construction standards with a combination of stimulus money, private and bond financing. At the hearing, NYCHA officials detailed the complex financial transaction slated to be completed by the Stimulus Program deadline of March 17, 2010. The arrangement will provide that all the apartments are treated exactly like regular public housing and that the residents have all of the same rights. They will, however, be owned by 2 separate non-profit entities controlled by NYCHA. Federalization would bring approximately \$100 million each year of additional funds to NYCHA for these developments and provide for their ongoing stability. The developments, with more than 20,000 units, were built by New York City and State, but are owned and maintained by NYCHA as public housing without any operating subsidy at all.

Councilmembers Mendez and Chin Visit Senior Centers to Reassure the Elderly and Condemn Hate Crime Violence on the Lower East Side: On April 13, Rosie, along with Councilmember Chin, Commanding Officer Hogan of Police Service Area (PSA) 4 and representatives from the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) visited three senior programs to speak out against the recent attacks on senior citizens of Asian descent and to calm fears about any on-going violence. Between March 31st and April 6th, five Asian women on the Lower East Side were attacked by youth. Since the attacks, the alleged perpetrators have been caught, but concern persists about the disturbing pattern of young people menacing the elderly of another ethnic group. The City-officials visited Grand Street Settlement Senior Lunch Program at Gompers's Houses, the BEST Program located in Baruch Addition Senior Housing and Henry Street Settlement's Good Companions Senior Center located in Vladeck Houses. Rosie said: "I am extremely distressed that some young people in my district, who have mothers and grandmothers who also walk these streets, could prey on the mothers and grandmothers of their schoolmates of Asian descent. Bias crimes will not be tolerated when they are committed by a juvenile or by an adult.

Rosie and her colleague Margaret Chin came together in solidarity to encourage seniors –regardless of immigration status, race, class, ethnicity or gender to speak out against any sort of attack, whether it be verbal or physical. Rosie encouraged seniors to report instances either to the NYPD, PSA 4, or directly to the District Offices of either elected official, who can then pass the information on to the pertinent police precinct. She praised caring community residents, including some relatives of accused perpetrators, for coming forward and providing useful information about the incidents. The Lower East Side has historically been a very diverse community and we must all stand together against needless violence and ethnic profiling.

Rosie fights for The American Sign Language School: In recent weeks the Department of Education has made a new plan to relocate the Clinton School of Artist and Writers with a population of

250 plus students into the American Sign Language School (ASL). ASL has been vibrant part the deaf community since 1908 providing social, educational and cultural programs for an extraordinary group that includes deaf, hard of hearing, children of deaf adults (CODA) and also hearing students. Rosie is concerned that the Department of Education's (DOE) latest Educational Impact Statement to co-locate these schools would cause both safety issues and programmatic disruption. The plan will mean the ASL will have to give up 10 classrooms, and numerous enrichment rooms used for art, music, and science. PS 347 (the elementary ASL school) as well as the High School 47 (ASL high school) form a unique bilingual community. Rosie agrees with the parents of the Clinton Middle School for Writers who also oppose the co-location. Rosie will continue to meet with all the stake holders to preserve the long history of The American Sign Language School.

Closing of St. Vincent's Will Further Tax Already Strained New York Hospital

System: Rosie joins others from both the east and west sides of lower Manhattan who desperately fear the consequences of the closure of St. Vincent's Hospital which has served Greenwich Village for 150 years. In addition to the direct and devastating consequences to health services on the west side, Rosie fears the indirect affect it will have on east side residents. Now that more than 3,000 employees, many of whom live in lower Manhattan, have received pink slips and services are being curtailed, there will be an inevitable strain on over-taxed and undercompensated hospitals across town. St. Vincent's managed approximately 62,000 emergency visits, nearly 1,800 births, almost 22,000 hospital admissions and 263,000 outpatient visits a year. All of this now will be shifted to other strained providers including Beth Israel, NYU, Bellevue and Gouverneur. The projection is especially dire for latter two, which are part of the New York City Health and Hospital Corporation (HHC). HHC, even before the closure of St. Vincent's, was projecting a \$1.4 billion loss in operating income for the upcoming fiscal year. HHC had already cut more than 1,000 jobs, curtailed services and announced cutbacks in facilities improvements. Rosie will continue to work with her colleagues at the City and State levels to minimize the negative consequences for the public's health.

Rosie Votes "No" on Carriage Horse Bill: A long time advocate for an all out ban of carriage horses in Central Park, Rosie joined a few of her colleagues in voting against a bill that would make minor improvements to the conditions under which these animals are kept. Intro 35 increases the size of stalls, gives the horses more days off per year and requires more veterinary care. In exchange the fees for an hour's ride would be increased to \$50 for 20 minutes. During the last session of the Council, Rosie had supported Intro 658 which would have banned the operating of horse drawn cabs in New York City. Rosie believes that carriage horses are dangerously out of place in midtown's congested streets. They are hazardous both for the animals and for the emergency vehicles, bikes, taxis and pedestrians. The horses' lifespans are curtailed by the inhospitable conditions of pollution, cramped quarters and overwork. Intro 35 passed the Council and is expected to be signed by the Mayor later this month.

Rosie Criticizes Department of Parks Vendor Rules: On April 23rd, Rosie testified at a Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) hearing on proposed rules that would drastically reduce the number of vendors allowed to sell artistic materials around four New York parks. With regard to Union Square, the only park affected in Rosie's district, the plan would allow 18 vendors to set up tables at the southeast and southwest corners of the park on a first come first serve basis. Rosie acknowledges that some controls on the proliferation of vendors are necessary on these popular parks, but that the rules as

developed by Parks seem to infringe on constitutionally protected speech. Rosie fears that, for instance these rules would not permit a candidate for elective office to petition within the park. Additionally, despite asking for an explanation from Parks on how the number of permitted vendors and the specific locations were determined, Rosie was disappointed that no satisfactory rationale was provided. Rosie hopes that the DRP will rework the rules before any implementation.

Rosie Holds an Oversight Hearing on NYCHA's Section 3/Resident Employment

Program: On May 10th, the Committee on Public Housing, chaired by Rosie held a second oversight hearing on the Section 3/Resident Employment program. Section 3 is a provision of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968 which requires public housing authorities to provide job training, employment, and contracting opportunities for public housing and low-income residents in local construction projects. While the federal agency for Housing and Urban Development (HUD) mandates the Section 3 program, it does not fund it. At the hearing, Chairman Rhea detailed NYCHA's experience working with other city agencies, local non-profits and academic institutions to increase job training and employment opportunities. He stated that 2009 federal stimulus funding includes Section 3 requirements and to date NYCHA has hired 103 public housing residents to work in construction and anticipates that 303 residents will be hired when the program is finished.

Chairman Rhea also announced a newly formed partnership with the Robin Hood Foundation to launch a Workforce Training Academy which beginning this fall will train and place NYCHA residents in construction and janitorial jobs. Robin Hood will provide funding directly to non-profit providers who will train the residents. This is a pilot program involving 150 participants, but if successful, Robin Hood anticipates expanding to serve many more residents. Recruitment is slated to begin in late summer. For more information on eligibility, NYCHA residents should call Resident Employer Services at (718) 289-8100.

The Committee on Public Housing also voted to support Resolution 207, which calls upon the United States Congress to enact H.R. 4224, the "Together We Care Act of 2009," which would establish a three-year pilot program to train public housing residents as home health care aides and provide covered home-based health care services to residents of public housing. This Resolution passed the Council on May 25th.

Department of Transportation Plans for Union Square and 34th Street Raise

Concerns: During the past weeks DOT has announced two different plans for highly trafficked areas in Rosie's district. The first, at East 17th Street and Broadway, where traffic, the park and pedestrians meet, is slated for redirection of traffic and new open space. This plan, which can be implemented by summer, has many positive features, but neighbors on small side streets like E.18th fear major increases in congestion. Local businesses also fear the implications of closed streets. Rosie will continue to press for assurances about the impact on local streets before any plan is implemented. The second proposal is for a massive realignment of 34th Street, including dedicated bus lanes and redirection of traffic. Clearly this street is a major linchpin for traffic circulation in the metropolitan region and requires thorough and thoughtful planning to keep the city moving. However, the mundane aspects of daily living on the more residential East 34th Street, can not be forgotten in this planning. Rosie will continue to enforce the importance of this as DOT begins the two year process of the environmental assessment and implementation.