

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Wednesday, April 15, 2026
10:11 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCIL PRESIDENT KENYATTA JOHNSON
COUNCILWOMAN NINA AHMAD
COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS
COUNCILWOMAN KENDRA BROOKS
COUNCILMAN MICHAEL DRISCOLL
COUNCILWOMAN JAMIE GAUTHIER
COUNCILWOMAN KATHERINE GILMORE RICHARDSON
COUNCILMAN JIM HARRITY
COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR.
COUNCILWOMAN RUE LANDAU
COUNCILWOMAN QUETCY M. LOZADA
COUNCILMAN NICOLAS O'ROURKE
COUNCILMAN ANTHONY PHILLIPS
COUNCILMAN MARK SQUILLA
COUNCILMAN ISAIAH THOMAS
COUNCILMAN JEFFREY YOUNG, JR.

BILLS: 260199, 260200, 260201, 260202,
260203, 260204, 260205, 260206,
260208, 260209, 260295
RESOLUTION: 260227, 260253, 260254,
260255, 260256

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COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

RICHARDSON: This is the hearing of
the Committee of the Whole
regarding Bill Nos. 260199, 260200,
260201, 260202, 260203, 260204,
260205, 260206, 260208, 260209,
260295 and Resolution Nos. 260227,
260253, 260254, 260255 and 260256.

Ms. Loughead, will you
please call the roll to take
attendance.

THE CLERK:
Councilmember Squilla.

(No response.)

THE CLERK:
Councilmember Gauthier.

(No response.)

THE CLERK:
Councilmember Jones.

(No response.)

THE CLERK:
Councilmember Young.

(No response.)

1 THE CLERK:

2 Councilmember Driscoll.

3 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

4 Present.

5 THE CLERK:

6 Councilmember Lozada.

7 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

8 Present.

9 THE CLERK:

10 Councilmember Bass.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:

12 Present.

13 THE CLERK:

14 Councilmember Phillips.

15 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

16 Present.

17 THE CLERK:

18 Councilmember O'Neill.

19 (No response.)

20 THE CLERK:

21 Councilmember Gilmore Richardson.

22 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

23 RICHARDSON: Present.

24 THE CLERK:

1 Councilmember Thomas.

2 (No response.)

3 THE CLERK:

4 Councilmember Harrity.

5 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

6 Present.

7 THE CLERK:

8 Councilmember Ahmad.

9 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:

10 Present.

11 THE CLERK:

12 Councilmember Landau.

13 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

14 Present.

15 THE CLERK:

16 Councilmember Brooks.

17 (No response.)

18 THE CLERK:

19 Councilmember O'Rourke.

20 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

21 Present.

22 THE CLERK: Council

23 President Johnson.

24 (No response.)

1 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

2 RICHARDSON: Thank you. A quorum
3 of the committee is present and
4 this hearing is now called to
5 order.

6 Ms. Loughhead, will you
7 please read the titles of the bills
8 and the resolutions.

9 THE CLERK: Bill No.
10 260199, an Ordinance adopting the
11 Operating Budget for Fiscal Year
12 2027.

13 Bill No. 260200, an
14 Ordinance to adopt a Fiscal Year
15 2027 Capital Budget.

16 Bill No. 260201, an
17 Ordinance to adopt a Capital
18 Program for the six Fiscal Years,
19 2027-2032 inclusive.

20 Bill No. 260202, an
21 Ordinance amending Chapter 19-2400
22 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled
23 "Hotel Room Rental Tax," by
24 providing for an additional excise

1 tax on hotel room rentals, all
2 under certain terms and conditions.

3 Bill No. 260203, an
4 Ordinance amending Subcode "A" (The
5 Philadelphia Administrative Code)
6 of Title 4 of The Philadelphia Code
7 (The Building, Construction and
8 Occupancy Code), by adding and
9 revising Zoning Board of Adjustment
10 fees and provisions regarding
11 hearing scheduling, all under
12 certain terms and conditions.

13 Bill No. 260204, an
14 Ordinance amending Title 3 of The
15 Philadelphia Code, entitled "Air
16 Management Code" to modify the
17 amounts of license and permit fees,
18 under certain terms and conditions.

19 Bill No. 2602055, an
20 Ordinance amending Section 19-1806
21 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled
22 "Authorization of Realty Use and
23 Occupancy Tax," to clarify the
24 imposition of the tax on the use or

1 occupancy of real estate with
2 respect to cell towers, all under
3 certain terms and conditions.

4 Bill No. 260206, an
5 Ordinance amending Chapter 6-600 of
6 The Philadelphia Code ("Asbestos"),
7 by adding and providing provisions
8 related to various fees, all under
9 certain terms and conditions.

10 Bill No. 260208, an
11 Ordinance amending Chapter 19-1800
12 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled
13 "School Tax Authorization," to a
14 add a new Section 19-1808, entitled
15 "Authorization of Rideshare Use
16 Tax," to authorize the Board of the
17 School District of Philadelphia to
18 levy a tax upon the use by a
19 passenger of a transportation
20 network company for a prearranged
21 ride that originates in
22 Philadelphia; all under certain
23 terms and conditions.

24 Bill No. 260209, an

1 Ordinance amending Title 19 of The
2 Philadelphia Code, entitled
3 "Finances, Taxes and Collections,"
4 to add a new Chapter 19-4800,
5 entitled "Retail Delivery Tax," to
6 establish a tax on orders for the
7 delivery in Philadelphia of retail
8 consumer and other tangible goods,
9 all under certain terms and
10 conditions.

11 Bill No. 260295, an
12 Ordinance Authorizing and approving
13 the execution and delivery of a
14 Service Agreement between the City
15 and the Philadelphia Authority for
16 Industrial Development relating to
17 the provision by the Philadelphia
18 Authority for Industrial
19 Development of development
20 assistance to support certain costs
21 related to promoting economic and
22 commercial development of the City;
23 approving the guaranty by the
24 Philadelphia Authority for

1 Industrial Development of certain
2 obligations related to the issuance
3 of a letter of credit to secure the
4 funding of such costs; authorizing
5 and approving the obligation of the
6 City to pay in full when due the
7 Service Fee and other amounts
8 payable under the Service Agreement
9 and covenanting to make necessary
10 appropriations for such purposes;
11 and authorizing City officials to
12 take necessary or appropriate
13 actions to accomplish the intent
14 and purpose of the ordinance, all
15 under certain terms and conditions.

16 Resolution No. 260227,
17 providing for the approval by the
18 Council of the City of Philadelphia
19 of a revised Five Year Financial
20 Plan for the City of Philadelphia,
21 covering Fiscal Years 2027 through
22 2031, and incorporating revisions
23 with respect to Fiscal Year 2026,
24 which is to be submitted by the

1 Mayor to the Pennsylvania
2 Intergovernmental Cooperation
3 Authority pursuant to an
4 Intergovernmental Cooperation
5 Agreement, by and between the City
6 and the Authority.

7 Resolution No. 260253,
8 appointing Bekir Gunaydin to the
9 Board of the Director of the Old
10 City Special Services District.

11 Resolution No. 260254,
12 appointing Felicia Wilson to the
13 Board of the Directors for the Old
14 City Special Services District.

15 Resolution No. 260255,
16 appointing Ken Weller to the Board
17 of Directors for the Old City
18 Special Services District.

19 Resolution No. 260256,
20 appointing Kya Kerner to the Board
21 of Directors of the Old City
22 Special Services District.

23 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

24 RICHARDSON: Thank you. Today we

1 will first hear brief testimony and
2 take action on Bill No. 260295
3 regarding the City's bid to host
4 the 2028 Democratic National
5 Convention as well as Old City
6 Special Services District
7 appointment resolutions.

8 After taking action on
9 the DNC bill and Old City
10 appointment resolutions, we will
11 continue to hear testimony on bills
12 regarding operating and capital
13 spending measures for Fiscal Year
14 '27, our Capital Program and a
15 Forward-looking Capital Plan for
16 Fiscal Year 2027 through Fiscal
17 Year 2032.

18 Ms. Loughead, will you
19 please call the panel to testify on
20 Bill No. 260295 regarding the
21 City's bid to host the 2028
22 Democratic National Convention.

23 THE CLERK: The panel to
24 testify on this bill is Vanessa

1 Garrett Harley, Chief Deputy Mayor,
2 who's also joined by Rob Dubow,
3 Finance Director, and Jackie Dunn,
4 City Treasurer.

5 (Witnesses approached
6 witness table.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

8 RICHARDSON: Good morning to each
9 of you. Thank you so much for
10 being here this morning. We ask
11 that you state your name for the
12 record and proceed with your
13 testimony.

14 MS. GARRETT HARLEY:
15 Good morning. This is Vanessa
16 Garrett Harley, Chief Deputy Mayor
17 for the City of Philadelphia. Good
18 morning all Councilmembers. With
19 me today is Rob Dubow, City Finance
20 Director and the City Treasurer
21 Jackie Dunn. I'm here to testify
22 in favor of Bill No. 260295. The
23 bill would support the City's bid
24 to host the 2028 Democratic

1 National Convention by authorizing
2 the City of Philadelphia to enter
3 into a service agreement with the
4 Philadelphia Authority for
5 Industrial Development known as
6 PAID.

7 Under this agreement,
8 the City will agree to pay a
9 service fee equal to PAID
10 obligations, if any, are incurred
11 under the guaranty of the Host
12 Committee, Pick Pennsylvania,
13 related to a \$35 million letter of
14 credit to support the 2028 bid.
15 The City has full confidence in
16 Pick Pennsylvania and its
17 fundraising capabilities, as it is
18 led by Ambassador David L. Cohen,
19 President, and Dan Hilferty, Chair.
20 For the bid, the form of service
21 agreement was submitted as an
22 amendment to this ordinance.

23 In 2016 when
24 Philadelphia last hosted the

1 Democratic National Convention, the
2 City utilized a similar structure,
3 and the City was not required to
4 make any payments under the 2016
5 guaranty as the Host Committee
6 raised the funds it needed. We
7 thank you for your partnership and
8 allowing us to include this bill in
9 today's hearing. I respectfully
10 request a suspension of the rules
11 to allow for first reading at the
12 next meeting of City Council. This
13 concludes my testimony. We are
14 more than happy to answer any
15 questions that you may have at this
16 time.

17 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

18 RICHARDSON: Thank you. Thank you
19 very much, Deputy Mayor Vanessa
20 Garrett Harley. And to Rob Dubow
21 and our City Treasurer Jackie Dunn,
22 we appreciate you all being here.
23 Also wanted to take the opportunity
24 to thank our Council President for

1 the expeditious scheduling of this
2 hearing, particularly after the
3 Pick Pennsylvania event led by
4 Mayor Cherelle Parker.

5 Of course, must shout
6 out Aaron Wilson and the hard work
7 they are doing in conjunction with
8 David Cohen, Dan Hilferty, Chairman
9 Brady and others to Pick
10 Pennsylvania.

11 I also wanted to shout
12 out our colleagues here in Council
13 and Councilwoman Cindy Bass, who
14 serves on the DNC as well as
15 Councilmember Jim Harrity. We
16 thank you both for your national
17 service on our behalf.

18 Very quick question.
19 Just wanted to know how will PAID
20 select the bank to provide the line
21 of credit?

22 MS. GARRETT HARLEY: I
23 believe that the selection has been
24 made with an amalgamated bank, who

1 there is a long partnership with
2 the Democratic National Convention.

3 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

4 RICHARDSON: And as you stated, we
5 do not draw down on the line of
6 credit. We did not in 2016. Are
7 there any additional costs
8 associated with this at all?

9 MS. GARRETT HARLEY: I'm
10 going to defer that question to Rob
11 Dubow.

12 MR. DUBOW: No, no
13 additional cost.

14 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

15 RICHARDSON: Yes, just stating that
16 for the record. So we thank you
17 and we appreciate that work.

18 Are there any additional
19 questions or comments from members
20 of the committee for these
21 witnesses?

22 Okay. Chair recognizes
23 Councilmember Harrity.

24 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

1 Thank you. First, I want to say
2 sorry, I didn't make it out there
3 this time. It's the first one I've
4 missed since I was elected. But I
5 did hear that you guys put up a
6 really nice showing. Heard the
7 party was really good and heard
8 that you guys were out there
9 lobbying for us. So thank you for
10 that.

11 MS. GARRETT HARLEY:

12 Thank you.

13 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: So
14 as far as the other cities are
15 concerned, right, where do you
16 see -- can you just explain why and
17 what you explained to them, the
18 leadership of why they should come
19 here to Philadelphia rather than go
20 to, say, Georgia or Louisiana or
21 one of the other places?

22 MS. GARRETT HARLEY: So
23 Philadelphia has the distinct
24 pleasure of having -- we're one of

1 the five finalists. I kind of
2 remember the other cities just for
3 memory's sake. I call them the
4 ABCDs. It's Atlanta, Boston,
5 Chicago, Denver, and then
6 Philadelphia.

7 And so, what we are
8 trying to explain to them is just
9 how wonderful and great our city is
10 and all the amenities that the city
11 has to offer. And what we have
12 that makes us such an attractive
13 destination for conventions and
14 things of the like, we have hotels,
15 Center City. We have a very robust
16 and active Center City area.

17 We have added an
18 additional, about 28% of hotel
19 space since the time that we had
20 the Democratic Convention here in
21 2016. We have a very large and
22 accommodating Convention Center
23 that is here and very walkable, in
24 walkable distance to many things.

1 We have -- as you'll
2 hear later today, I know SEPTA's
3 hearing is today. We have a very
4 robust public transportation system
5 that can take people in this city
6 from end-to-end and even out to the
7 counties and other places that we
8 can advertise. The arena is really
9 important. We have the Arena
10 District, and we have, you know,
11 Xfinity Mobile and all the other
12 areas there.

13 And then when you talk
14 about our cultural institutions and
15 the Parkway, right, I'm saying the
16 Parkway because a lot of our
17 cultural institutions are on the
18 Parkway, just what it looks like
19 from an aesthetic purpose. But
20 we're also the birthplace of
21 democracy and this is the year to
22 really bring that out.

23 I'm putting in a
24 shameless plug because I'm also

1 head of the Special Events of the
2 America 250 stuff here in the city,
3 right. But we are the birthplace
4 of democracy. We are where the
5 Declaration of Independence was
6 signed, and we're talking about
7 democracy and bringing the
8 Democratic National Party here.
9 And many of the values that it was
10 founded on is what we argue are the
11 values of the city.

12 Now, while we're talking
13 about the Democratic National
14 Convention, it's not a political
15 thing, certainly not for me. I'm
16 apolitical believe it or not, and
17 wouldn't even be allowed to be
18 involved in it because of the city
19 rules if it was political. This is
20 about a civic event and talking to
21 them about the civic education and
22 what it could bring to the city.
23 But the economic impact --

24 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

1 Exactly.

2 MS. GARRETT HARLEY:

3 Having a Democratic National

4 Convention --

5 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

6 Show me the money, baby.

7 MS. GARRETT HARLEY: --

8 hundreds of millions of dollars

9 could be, you know, made for the

10 city, from everything from our

11 restaurants to our hotels. We did

12 talk to them about our now Michelin

13 Star restaurants and our excellent

14 restaurant scene. We have a lot of

15 restaurants. We have nightlife.

16 We have what people would want if

17 they're coming to a convention.

18 And so, I'm pretty confident that

19 it will go favorably.

20 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

21 Thank you.

22 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

23 RICHARDSON: Thank you. Thank you,

24 Councilmember Harrity.

1 The Chair now recognizes
2 Councilmember Cindy Bass.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:

4 Thank you, Madam Chair.

5 Good morning.

6 MS. GARRETT HARLEY:

7 Good morning.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: It
9 was a pleasure to be with you in
10 New Orleans last weekend.

11 MS. GARRETT HARLEY: You
12 as well.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: You
14 did a fantastic job.

15 MS. GARRETT HARLEY:
16 Thank you.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: I
18 think that the City of Philadelphia
19 was well-represented. Listen,
20 Patti LaBelle was there.

21 MS. GARRETT HARLEY:
22 Absolutely.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:
24 Everybody got a picture with Patti

1 LaBelle.

2 MS. GARRETT HARLEY: We
3 brought in our best.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: But
5 it really was something to talk
6 about because, you know, we
7 traveled around in circles and
8 myself and other members of the
9 representation from Pennsylvania,
10 we traveled around to see what the
11 word was from other events that
12 were happening to woo the DNC to
13 their cities. And I have to tell
14 you, hands down, Philadelphia
15 really came out strong. So I
16 really believe that it's going to
17 be Philadelphia.

18 We're very hopeful, but
19 at the same time the presentation
20 really made us look good. It felt
21 good. People were excited about
22 the possibilities. And I think
23 that we are really a party town.
24 We don't talk about it in that

1 particular way, but we certainly
2 know how to put on an event, a
3 party, a show, activities like
4 this.

5 And for those of us who
6 participated in 2016, we did a
7 phenomenal job. When the
8 Republican Committee came here, I
9 think it was 2000 or 2004, came to
10 Philadelphia, that was phenomenal.
11 And it's only gotten better and
12 better every single time that we've
13 done it. And I agree with you,
14 it's not just about one particular
15 party.

16 Because even though I'm
17 a member of the DNC, we also want
18 everybody to come out. There's
19 going to be something really for
20 everyone to see and to support and
21 to recognize that the City of
22 Philadelphia is really a special
23 place. So I just really wanted to
24 say kudos on the work that you did.

1 It was really phenomenal. I'm
2 sorry everybody didn't get a chance
3 to see it, but it was really
4 fantastic.

5 MS. GARRETT HARLEY:

6 Thank you.

7 Madam Chair, could I
8 just add one thing for the record I
9 think is important to put on about
10 Philadelphia. We also talked,
11 which is a huge deciding factor,
12 about public safety, and that we
13 have a world-class police force.
14 We have a phenomenal Commissioner
15 here.

16 Our police force is very
17 used to handling large events.
18 We've done the Pope. We've done
19 the NFL Draft. We are about to do
20 FIFA and MLB and a bunch of other
21 stuff with that. Our officers, we
22 have a very well-respected
23 Dignitary Affairs Unit and other
24 things. So the public safety

1 aspect is another huge part of what
2 we are promoting and able to offer.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Yes.
4 Excellent, excellent work. Thank
5 you.

6 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

7 RICHARDSON: Thank you. Thank you
8 so much, Councilmember Bass, and
9 thank you for representing
10 Philadelphia.

11 Are there any additional
12 questions?

13 Okay. Great. The Chair
14 now recognizes Councilmember Ahmad
15 and then Councilmember Lozada.

16 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:

17 Thank you, Chair.

18 Good morning. And it's
19 wonderful to hear we're putting our
20 best foot forward. I had a
21 question to do a comparison between
22 what we experienced in 2016 in
23 terms of what it cost the city and
24 was it a net positive or a

1 negative, given police and all
2 these other things that happened?

3 I know we're not 2016
4 now. But just to get some idea,
5 the LC is not going to cost us
6 anything. It's just having it
7 there. But the rest of it, the
8 actual operations of putting on
9 that, what did it cost the city in
10 2016 so we can sort of extrapolate
11 for 2028?

12 MS. GARRETT HARLEY: Can
13 I ask Rob Dubow, our Finance
14 Director, to handle that question.

15 MR. DUBOW: Yeah, I
16 can't tell you off the top my head.
17 But we did do analyses back then,
18 so we'll find them and we'll get
19 that to the Chair.

20 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: So
21 do we know that it cost us or it
22 was a net?

23 MR. DUBOW: It was a net
24 gain.

1 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: And
2 that's really the selling point to
3 our people, to say that we're
4 putting on a big party and yet,
5 we're asking our people to do a
6 lot, we're paying taxes, we're
7 doing this, that and the other and
8 we are ready for the party. So I
9 just want to make sure that we have
10 all the data to say why we are
11 supporting this, because it's a net
12 gain, it brings in hopefully new
13 business, all of those things,
14 because we need that information to
15 tell our constituents why are we
16 asking you to pay more for X, Y and
17 Z, why are we putting on a party
18 that might cost us. But if it
19 doesn't, then we're happy to say it
20 won't cost us.

21 So thank you, Chair. I
22 think we need that information --

23 MR. DUBOW: You get two
24 things. You get the straight

1 benefit, which is things like hotel
2 rooms, restaurants, all the
3 spending from delegates. But you
4 also get to be on an international
5 stage and show the city off, which
6 then helps bring in business for
7 years to come.

8 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:

9 Just to make sure I'm on the
10 record, I'm supportive of this. I
11 just want to have enough
12 information so that we can answer
13 questions that will surely come our
14 way.

15 MS. GARRETT HARLEY: And
16 if I could, I do have one data
17 point.

18 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

19 RICHARDSON: Yes. Please share the
20 data point with Councilman Ahmad,
21 and then I'd like to recognize --
22 I'm sorry. Please allow me to
23 recognize Councilmember Bass for a
24 point of information.

1 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:

2 Thank you. I just really wanted to
3 go back to Rob Dubow's point in
4 terms of generating additional
5 tourism dollars for the City of
6 Philadelphia's future. And so, I'm
7 not sure exactly what the numbers
8 are, even though I'm sure that
9 they're in the positive. But I can
10 tell you this, as someone who's
11 been to every Democratic Convention
12 that's been had since about '96, I
13 can tell you that some of these
14 cities are not easy to move around
15 in. And just as a consumer, it
16 made me say, I don't particularly
17 want to go back there. Nice city,
18 not a bad place, but it's very
19 difficult to move around.

20 And when you're moving
21 large numbers of people, you need a
22 transportation network. You need
23 to be able to have the
24 infrastructure in place. And a lot

1 of these other places don't have
2 what Philadelphia has. And I think
3 that that makes it a place that
4 people will come for the DNC, but
5 also want to come back and spend
6 their tourism dollars in the
7 future.

8 So thank you, Madam
9 Chair.

10 MS. GARRETT HARLEY: And
11 if I could, just in terms of the
12 data point I will make sure that
13 every Councilmember gets a copy of
14 kind of a one-pager that has a lot
15 of facts that you could share with
16 your constituents from Pick
17 Pennsylvania. But the 2016
18 Democratic National Convention, the
19 economic impact that went to the
20 city was \$230 million. And we
21 expect to do as well, probably
22 better.

23 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:
24 Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

1 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

2 RICHARDSON: Thank you. Thank you
3 very much, Councilmember Ahmad.

4 The Chair now recognizes
5 Councilmember Lozada.

6 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

7 Good morning. Thank you for being
8 with us. I think Councilmember
9 Bass just made the point of
10 information clear, right. We need
11 a transportation center that is
12 going to be able to support mass
13 groups of people so that the
14 economic opportunity that these
15 conventions bring to our city are
16 spread across neighborhoods.

17 I guess my concern and
18 my question is -- and we'll hear
19 from SEPTA later on this morning.
20 As we continue to attract these
21 groups into our city, how are we
22 working with our transit system to
23 ensure public safety, rides that
24 are, favorable, that are welcoming?

1 We struggle every day on the
2 Market-Frankford Line.

3 Many of my staff take
4 public transportation to work every
5 day and it is a daily struggle.
6 And so, how are we preparing our
7 mass transit system to be able to
8 respond appropriately to these
9 groups so like Member Bass said,
10 when they leave after the
11 convention, they choose to bring
12 their personal families back to
13 visit our city?

14 MS. GARRETT HARLEY:
15 Absolutely. I will say this and
16 then I will leave it to the experts
17 and even we can provide you with a
18 written response if you'd like it
19 more detailed, but we certainly
20 value our partnerships with SEPTA
21 and their leadership, very much
22 including them. We have our site
23 visit, which will be coming to the
24 City of Philadelphia, April 29th

1 through May 1st.

2 That kind of a question
3 you just asked is one of the things
4 certainly those folks who are
5 coming to town will be definitely
6 drilling down on, but our SEPTA
7 partners are will be and our
8 Philadelphia Police Department as
9 well as our Office of Emergency
10 Management and everybody else will
11 be working very closely together so
12 that we can ensure the safety of
13 everyone that comes here as well as
14 the safety of our residents as we
15 take that extremely seriously. But
16 I can get you a more detailed
17 answer if you want, but it would be
18 better coming from the public
19 safety experts who are handling
20 that part of it.

21 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: I
22 appreciate that. Thank you.

23 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

24 RICHARDSON: Thank you. Thank you

1 very much, Councilmember Lozada.

2 Are there any additional
3 questions for these witnesses?

4 (No response.)

5 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

6 RICHARDSON: Seeing none, we thank
7 you all very much for being here
8 this afternoon. We look forward to
9 continuing to work with you.

10 MS. GARRETT HARLEY:

11 Thank you so much.

12 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

13 RICHARDSON: Thank you. We will
14 now hear testimony regarding the
15 Old City Special Services
16 appointment resolutions.

17 Ms. Loughead, will you
18 please call the witness to testify
19 on these resolutions.

20 THE CLERK: Job
21 Itzkowitz, Executive Director Old
22 City Special Services District.

23 (Witness approached
24 witness table.)

1 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

2 RICHARDSON: Excellent. Thank you
3 very much for being here. Please
4 state your name for the record and
5 proceed with your testimony.

6 MR. ITZKOWITZ: Good
7 morning, Madam Chair Gilmore
8 Richardson and all members of
9 Council. My name is Job Itzkowitz,
10 the Executive Director of the Old
11 City Special Services District.
12 I'm here to testify in support of
13 Resolution Nos. 260253, 260254,
14 260255, 260256, respectively
15 appointing Bekir Gunaydin and
16 Felicia Wilson, Ken Weller and Kya
17 Kerner to the Board of the Old City
18 Special Services District. I've
19 submitted written testimony and I'm
20 happy to answer any questions you
21 may have.

22 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

23 RICHARDSON: Thank you. Look
24 forward to working with you as

1 always. We thank you for being
2 here this morning.

3 Are there any questions
4 or comments from members of the
5 committee for this witness?

6 (No response.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

8 RICHARDSON: Any questions or
9 comments for this witness?

10 (No response.)

11 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

12 RICHARDSON: Seeing none, we thank
13 you very much for joining us here
14 this morning.

15 MR. ITZKOWITZ: Thank
16 you very much.

17 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

18 RICHARDSON: There being no further
19 questions from members of the
20 committee and no other witnesses on
21 the list to testify, I will ask if
22 there is anyone else present in
23 this hearing who wishes to offer
24 testimony on Bill Nos. 260295 and

1 Resolution Nos. 260253, 260254,
2 260255 and 260256?

3 (No response.)

4 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

5 RICHARDSON: Hearing none, I want
6 to thank all of the witnesses for
7 their participation today. We
8 value your opinion.

9 We will now go into our
10 public meeting to consider the
11 action to be taken on Bill No.
12 260295 and Resolution Nos. 260253,
13 260254, 260255 and 260256.

14 Ms. Loughead, will you
15 please call the roll to take
16 attendance.

17 THE CLERK:
18 Councilmember Squilla.

19 (No response.)

20 THE CLERK:
21 Councilmember Gauthier.

22 (No response.)

23 THE CLERK:
24 Councilmember Jones.

1 (No response.)

2 THE CLERK:

3 Councilmember Young.

4 (No response.)

5 THE CLERK:

6 Councilmember Driscoll.

7 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

8 Present.

9 THE CLERK:

10 Councilmember Lozada.

11 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

12 Present.

13 THE CLERK:

14 Councilmember Bass.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:

16 Present.

17 THE CLERK:

18 Councilmember Phillips.

19 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

20 Present.

21 THE CLERK:

22 Councilmember O'Neill.

23 (No response.)

24 THE CLERK:

1 Councilmember Gilmore Richardson.

2 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

3 RICHARDSON: Present.

4 THE CLERK:

5 Councilmember Thomas.

6 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:

7 Present.

8 THE CLERK:

9 Councilmember Harrity.

10 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

11 Present.

12 THE CLERK:

13 Councilmember Ahmad.

14 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:

15 Present.

16 THE CLERK:

17 Councilmember Landau.

18 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

19 Present.

20 THE CLERK:

21 Councilmember Brooks.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:

23 Present.

24 THE CLERK:

1 Councilmember O'Rourke.

2 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

3 Present.

4 THE CLERK: Council

5 President Johnson.

6 (No response.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

8 RICHARDSON: Thank you. Thank you
9 all so much for being here. We
10 recognize the presence of a quorum.

11 The Chair now
12 recognizes -- the meeting will be
13 at ease.

14 (Council at ease.)

15 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

16 RICHARDSON: Thank you so much.

17 The Chair now recognizes
18 Councilmember Phillips for a motion
19 on Bill No. 260295.

20 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

21 Thank you, Ms. Chairman.

22 I move that Bill No.
23 260295 be reported from this
24 committee with a favorable

1 recommendation and further move
2 that the rules of Council be
3 suspended to permit first reading
4 of this bill at the next session of
5 Council.

6 (Duly seconded.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

8 RICHARDSON: The Chair notes for
9 the record that Councilmember
10 Harrity seconds the motion.

11 And it's been moved and
12 properly seconded that Bill No.
13 260295 be reported from this
14 committee with a favorable
15 recommendation and further move
16 that the rules of Council be
17 suspended as to permit first
18 reading of this bill at the next
19 session of Council.

20 All those in favor will
21 indicate by stating aye.

22 (Aye.)

23 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

24 RICHARDSON: All those opposed?

1 (No response.)

2 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

3 RICHARDSON: The ayes have it and
4 the motion carries. Bill No.
5 260295 will be reported from this
6 committee with a favorable
7 recommendation with a request that
8 the rules of Council be suspended
9 as to permit first reading of this
10 bill at the next session of
11 Council.

12 The Chair now recognizes
13 Councilmember Phillips for a motion
14 on Resolution Nos. 260253, 260254,
15 260255 and 260256.

16 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:
17 Thank you, Majority Leader Chair
18 Gilmore Richardson.

19 I move that Resolution
20 Nos. 260253, 260254, 260255, 260256
21 be reported from this committee
22 with a favorable recommendation and
23 further move that the rules of
24 Council be suspended to permit

1 first reading of this bill at the
2 next session of Council.

3 (Duly seconded.)

4 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

5 RICHARDSON: The Chair notes for
6 the record that Councilman Harrity
7 seconds the motion.

8 It has been moved and
9 properly seconded that Resolution
10 Nos. 260253, 260254, 260255 and
11 260256 be reported from this
12 committee with a favorable
13 recommendation and further move
14 that the rules of Council be
15 suspended as to permit first
16 reading of these resolutions at the
17 next session of Council.

18 All those in favor of
19 the motion will indicate by stating
20 aye.

21 (Aye.)

22 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

23 RICHARDSON: All those opposed?

24 (No response.)

1 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

2 RICHARDSON: The ayes have it. And
3 Resolution Nos. 260253, 260254,
4 260255 and 260256 will be reported
5 from this committee with a
6 favorable recommendation with a
7 request for suspension of the rules
8 to permit consideration of these
9 resolutions at our next session of
10 Council.

11 We will now go back into
12 the hearing and take testimony on
13 the Fiscal Year '27 budget bills.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

15 JOHNSON: We will now continue to
16 hear testimony on bills regarding
17 operating and capital spending
18 measures for Fiscal Year 2027, a
19 Capital Program and a Forward-
20 looking Capital Plan for Fiscal
21 Year 2027 through Fiscal Year 2032.

22 Ms. Loughhead, will you
23 please call the first panel to
24 testify.

1 THE CLERK: Scott Sauer,
2 General Manager for SEPTA.

3 (Witnesses approached
4 witness table.)

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

6 JOHNSON: How you doing, Scott?
7 How are you?

8 MR. SAUER: Thank you.
9 I'm fine, Council President.
10 Appreciate it.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

12 JOHNSON: It always good to see
13 you. If you could just state your
14 name for the record and also your
15 team that will be joining you for
16 questioning from members of City
17 Council. Before you get started, I
18 was looking for Wendy Harvey Green.

19 MR. SAUER: I think
20 Wendy is waiting for the team. We
21 were rerouted through the entrance
22 into City Hall.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

24 JOHNSON: Okay. So I just want to

1 go on record and just acknowledge
2 her hard work and keeping the lines
3 of communication regarding all
4 things SEPTA as well as Pam
5 McCormick on the state level,
6 keeping us abreast on all things
7 SEPTA as we advocate and fight for
8 funding for mass transit on a state
9 level as well as we continue to
10 advocate and address the issues
11 regarding the SEPTA Bus Revolution
12 Plan and making sure it's
13 integrated to our Councilmanic
14 Districts in a smooth, seamless
15 fashion, and also your leadership
16 for being courage under the fire as
17 we address about a year ago the
18 lack of permanent funding on the
19 state budget and working with our
20 Governor Josh Shapiro on the
21 General Assembly for the flex
22 dollars that we did receive on two
23 separate occasions to keep our city
24 moving forward, particularly during

1 this year which is 2026, and we
2 need not have any type of
3 disruption to our transportation
4 system during this period as we
5 celebrate the birthplace of America
6 and there are several different
7 events that will be here during
8 this time.

9 So with that being said,
10 Scott, just state your name for the
11 record and please begin, and also
12 acknowledge your team that's here
13 for lines of questioning as well.

14 MR. SAUER: Certainly,
15 and thank you for that. My name is
16 Scott Sauer, S-a-u-e-r, and I am
17 the General Manager of SEPTA. Good
18 morning, Council President Johnson,
19 Transportation and Public Utilities
20 Committee Chair Driscoll and
21 members of City Council. I am
22 joined today at my right by SEPTA's
23 Chief of Transit Police, Charles
24 Lawson, and momentarily, my team

1 will be joining me. I have
2 representatives from across SEPTA's
3 various divisions and departments
4 representing everything from
5 finance to planning to operations
6 and engineering.

7 Thank you for the
8 opportunity to testify on SEPTA's
9 budget request as part of the City
10 of Philadelphia's Fiscal Year 2027
11 budget process. I'm grateful for
12 the Council's partnership,
13 thoughtful input and steadfast
14 advocacy for transit funding.

15 Today I am pleased to share how we
16 are using the city's support to
17 invest in safety, service, our
18 workforce and the long-term future
19 of the system.

20 The City of
21 Philadelphia's proposed \$134
22 million contribution is essential.
23 It enables SEPTA to meet its
24 legislatively-mandated requirement

1 to secure local matching funds,
2 unlocking nearly \$1 billion in
3 state-operating support.

4 Importantly, the city's
5 five-year commitment of nearly \$900
6 million positions SEPTA to fully
7 leverage additional funding
8 anticipated under the Governor's
9 proposed statewide transit funding
10 plan. The Mayor's budget proposal
11 would also maintain two critical
12 partnerships, the city's
13 participation in SEPTA's Key
14 Advantage program and its Zero Fare
15 program.

16 Together, these
17 initiatives expand access to public
18 transportation for city employees
19 and low-income residents, advancing
20 our shared goal of connecting
21 people to jobs, education and
22 opportunity. We're also grateful
23 for the Council's continued support
24 of other shared priorities,

1 including the new bus network
2 implementation, bus and trolley
3 prioritization and lane
4 enforcement, and service and
5 capital initiatives that we are
6 undertaking in the communities we
7 represent.

8 Much of my testimony
9 last year focused on SEPTA's fiscal
10 crisis and the difficult choices we
11 faced to address our budget
12 deficit. Action we took last
13 September redirecting funds
14 dedicated to future SEPTA capital
15 projects to fund operations helped
16 reverse service cuts and stabilize
17 SEPTA's operating budget for two
18 years through June of 2027.

19 Without any mechanism to
20 replace those funds, this one-time
21 fix carries long-term consequences
22 for how SEPTA can serve the city
23 and the region in the future.
24 Temporary fixes are not a

1 substitute for a sustainable
2 funding solution. We are
3 continuing to work with the
4 Governor and our Regional
5 Legislative Delegation to advance
6 dedicated statewide transit
7 funding.

8 And I want to thank the
9 members of City Council for their
10 advocacy on behalf of SEPTA. The
11 city's proposed investment comes at
12 a critical moment. Like
13 Philadelphia itself, SEPTA is
14 building on renewed momentum, and
15 we are using this period of
16 relative stability to focus on the
17 fundamentals of our mission,
18 safety, reliability, cleanliness,
19 accountability and putting our
20 customers first.

21 That focus is producing
22 measurable results. Today SEPTA
23 provides approximately 800,000
24 daily trips across bus, subway and

1 Regional Rail. Through July 2025,
2 we achieved 51 consecutive months
3 of year-over-year ridership growth.
4 And despite several major
5 snowstorms this winter, ridership
6 has returned following an
7 operationally challenging fourth
8 quarter last year.

9 Those who are riding see
10 an improved system. Our most
11 recent rider survey showed
12 improvement across all categories.
13 Serious crime is at historically
14 low levels, supported by the
15 largest uniformed transit police
16 force in more than a decade.
17 Following a 33% reduction in
18 serious crime in 2024, the largest
19 one-year decline in SEPTA's
20 history, safety improved further in
21 2025.

22 Preliminary data from
23 the first quarter this year shows
24 an additional 30% decrease compared

1 to the same period last year.
2 Targeted enforcement and
3 infrastructure improvements are
4 also making a difference. New fare
5 gates and transit police
6 deployments have reduced fare
7 evasion by 10% this year.

8 Fare evasion rates at
9 the 10 stations that have full
10 height fare gates have dropped
11 between 37% and 75%. Based on that
12 success, we are moving forward with
13 plans to install the new gates at
14 another 13 stations. Expanded
15 transit police staffing is allowing
16 us to deploy new transit police
17 patrols on the B and El trains.

18 Following federal
19 emergency orders issued last fall,
20 Regional Rail and trolley
21 operations have rebounded and we
22 are working to build the culture
23 needed to improve safety and
24 reliability moving forward. Our

1 skilled and dedicated workforce is
2 ready for the additional demands
3 that will be placed on the system
4 to fully support the city and the
5 region during the World Cup, the
6 nation's Semiquincentennial, the
7 Major League Baseball All Star Game
8 and the many other events planned
9 in the region this year.

10 With temporary funding
11 in place, we are advancing the
12 phased implementation of the New
13 Bus Network, which takes a major
14 step forward today with two public
15 hearings on the Fiscal Year 2027
16 Annual Service Plan that will guide
17 the initial phases. This year of
18 transition is reflected in the
19 operating and capital budgets we
20 released last week.

21 Through cost-containment
22 and operational improvements, SEPTA
23 has achieved approximately \$30
24 million in recurring annual

1 savings. Increased revenues from
2 advertising, parking and
3 investments has further
4 strengthened our financial
5 position. As a result, our
6 projected structural deficit has
7 been reduced from \$213 million in
8 Fiscal Year 2026 to \$192 million in
9 Fiscal Year 2027.

10 The budget also exposes
11 the tenuous status of the
12 Authority's capital program. SEPTA
13 faces a \$10 billion state-of-good-
14 repair backlog, including the
15 oldest rail vehicle fleet in the
16 nation that must be replaced. To
17 address critical infrastructure
18 needs, we anticipate borrowing \$4.3
19 billion over the next 12 years just
20 to advance essential replacement
21 and repairs. This increased
22 reliance on debt will constrain
23 future flexibility and limit our
24 ability to fully meet long-term

1 system needs.

2 Despite these
3 challenges, the progress of the
4 past year demonstrates SEPTA can
5 deliver for our riders and the
6 communities we serve. As we work
7 to secure a sustainable funding
8 solution, we are also investing
9 time and resources to develop our
10 vision for what SEPTA can be.
11 Across the Authority, employees are
12 helping develop SEPTA's next
13 strategic plan, built around five
14 core priorities: putting customers
15 first; investing in an engaged and
16 supported workforce; securing
17 stable, long-term funding;
18 practicing strong fiscal
19 stewardship; and modernizing our
20 infrastructure and technology with
21 adequate funding. This plan will
22 serve as the roadmap for the
23 Authority's next five years,
24 guiding organizational decisions

1 while establishing clear
2 accountability for results.

3 I'm committed to leading
4 SEPTA through this next phase, one
5 that moves the Authority beyond
6 recovery and toward a best-in-class
7 future. I look forward to
8 continuing that work with City
9 Council in achieving that goal.

10 Thank you for the opportunity to
11 testify today in support of SEPTA's
12 Fiscal Year 2027 operating budget
13 request. I appreciate the
14 continued support of Council and
15 welcome your questions.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

17 JOHNSON: Thank you very much. And
18 before I get started, I see she has
19 arrived. Again, I want to publicly
20 acknowledge Wendy Harvey Green for
21 her hard work and dedication.

22 (Applause.)

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

24 JOHNSON: I want to also welcome

1 Hugh Allen to the SEPTA team. I
2 know you from doing this work since
3 I've been a State Representative,
4 so you have a fine gentleman who's
5 a hard worker joining Team SEPTA.
6 So welcome, Hugh. Always good to
7 see you.

8 I just want to take a
9 moment to just answer a couple
10 questions. First, I want to
11 acknowledge the work of our
12 Councilmember Nicolas, who will
13 work for advocating for additional
14 funds for the SEPTA Key program and
15 Zero Fare. Thank you for your
16 leadership, making sure those most
17 in need have a chance to
18 participate and taking advantage of
19 SEPTA and all the opportunities
20 that it provides to utilize that
21 great transit system here in the
22 City of Philadelphia. So I want to
23 personally just thank you for your
24 hard work and advocacy around it.

1 When we went to
2 Harrisburg as a group, as a body
3 and we talked to different members,
4 the House and the Senate, but
5 primarily the Senate, just to get
6 their feedback, most importantly
7 lobbying them for advocacy, for
8 support, for permanent funding for
9 transit. A couple things will come
10 up in the midst of our
11 conversations that we would have to
12 clarify with them around the issue
13 of public safety, right.

14 And we know that our
15 numbers are down, but I think for
16 some apparent reason there's a
17 perception that our numbers are up.
18 So could you just take us to where
19 our numbers are? Two, what are we
20 doing regarding fare evasion? And
21 three, in terms of our police
22 force, are we growing. And if we
23 are growing, at what rate in terms
24 of how we're addressing public

1 safety?

2 And the last part, I
3 remember a couple budget sessions
4 ago, you and your team came and
5 talked about, separate from the law
6 enforcement aspect, we were also
7 dealing with issues regarding
8 behavioral health, drug addiction,
9 homelessness, to address the
10 quality-of-life issues that really
11 isn't a part of I would say the
12 total operation of SEPTA, but you
13 have incurred it as a result of you
14 running your business. And so,
15 could you touch on those four
16 things, please?

17 MR. SAUER: Yeah,
18 certainly. And I'll take a little
19 bit of it and I'll have the chief
20 kind of chime in with me
21 strategically. Safety and security
22 is essentially the highest -- it's
23 the highest value that we have and
24 we want to keep safety and security

1 at the forefront. We have made
2 tremendous progress over the last
3 several years at reducing crime on
4 the system, increasing our ability
5 to engage with the most vulnerable
6 riders and at the same time
7 increasing the ranks of our police
8 department.

9 We've made several
10 strategic decisions along the way
11 that have resulted in success in
12 all areas, primarily increasing the
13 ranks of our police officers. We
14 made several decisions a few years
15 ago, worked with the Transit Police
16 Union on pay increases, shrinking
17 the time it takes for an officer to
18 reach the top rate in making the
19 Transit Police Department a much
20 more attractive option for those
21 folks who want to enter law
22 enforcement.

23 We were able to do that
24 and we saw some dividends almost

1 immediately in officers who had
2 left the Transit Authority to
3 pursue other law enforcement
4 options returning to SEPTA. In
5 addition, we have been successfully
6 recruiting. We run two classes a
7 year in the municipal police
8 academy, and we have placed double-
9 digit number of students in that
10 police academy every single time
11 since about 2022.

12 One of the key changes
13 that we made in that time frame of
14 course was promoting Chief Lawson.
15 Chief Lawson, as a lifetime police
16 officer for SEPTA and has risen
17 through the ranks, taken a similar
18 path much like I have to achieve my
19 standing at the Authority, and the
20 Chief rose through the ranks and he
21 brought credibility with him into
22 his position that we needed. In
23 that position, he's been able to
24 motivate and attract recruits into

1 the Transit Police Department. And
2 I'd like to turn it to the Chief to
3 talk about our strategies and the
4 numbers as we see them today.

5 CHIEF LAWSON: So thank
6 you for the question. Thanks,
7 Scott, for that feedback. As Scott
8 said, our staffing numbers have
9 risen for the last three years.
10 They're as high as they've been in
11 12 or 15 years, where our staffing
12 level at present rate is 96.5% of
13 our budgeted head count. And I've
14 gotten a commitment from the
15 Authority that when I reach that
16 budgeted head count, I don't have
17 to stop hiring. So we are going to
18 continue to hire police officers
19 for as long as we can do so. So
20 that has paid big dividends, right.

21 Like Scott mentioned,
22 the historic lows that we're seeing
23 right now in crime, and they are
24 historic. I've been with the

1 organization for 34 years, and we
2 are seeing crime rate as low as
3 I've seen in my entire time in this
4 police department. So that work is
5 being done. We're having a lot of
6 success with our strategies.

7 The more difficult
8 challenge is the behavioral health
9 issues that you mentioned, right.
10 And it is a more difficult
11 challenge because we don't have the
12 same tools for long-term success as
13 we have. We can't arrest our way
14 out of it. Many of these issues
15 that we're dealing with are
16 non-criminal issues at all. And
17 yet, I have a police force of 200
18 officers that are trying to address
19 this with limited tools and
20 resources to effect long-term
21 change, but they're doing a great
22 job.

23 Last year my team
24 engaged in more than 200,000

1 engagements with that community
2 last year, moving the bulk of those
3 folks off. We're having limited
4 success in finding long-term
5 connection to resources, connection
6 to addiction treatment programs,
7 right. We're just not seeing that
8 right now. But we're moving this
9 community out of the system. We're
10 enforcing a code of conduct. We're
11 enforcing safety issues. And so,
12 we're having limited success with
13 nonlong-term tools.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

15 JOHNSON: What's the name of the --
16 before y'all came here, maybe two,
17 three budgets ago, you had a
18 gentleman who had a whole operation
19 that supplemented the police. Your
20 job is police, right, but you had
21 somebody else who was strictly
22 responsible for the behavioral
23 health issues, the drug addiction
24 issues and the homelessness issue

1 so all of it wouldn't be on just
2 the police. So where's the -- I
3 don't remember his name, but I
4 remember the presentation. And is
5 he still a part of this current
6 operation?

7 MR. SAUER: Yes. So the
8 person you're referring to is Ken
9 Divers. Ken retired from the
10 Authority I think the end of '24,
11 early '25. That program still
12 exists. It resides --

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
14 JOHNSON: What's the name of it?

15 MR. SAUER: SCOPE.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
17 JOHNSON: SCOPE, that's what it
18 was.

19 MR. SAUER: Safety,
20 Cleaning, Ownership, Partnership,
21 Engagement, and that program was,
22 as you described, designed to
23 remove the responsibility from
24 police officers. So that program

1 still exists. We are in a
2 transition phase. When we came to
3 you last year, we talked about we
4 were moving away from some of the
5 existing providers that we had
6 partnerships with.

7 We have a request for
8 proposals that's out on the street
9 today to re-engage with new
10 providers. But we also have
11 partnerships with local mental
12 health and addiction specialists
13 that are helping us. We have a
14 woman, Theresa White, who runs that
15 program within the police
16 department. And so, we've married
17 the two components together to give
18 it structure and better strategies
19 for how we deploy officers, how we
20 deploy specialists to engage with
21 the most vulnerable that are on the
22 system.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

24 JOHNSON: But in the meanwhile

1 while you go through transition and
2 the RFP is out there, I guess what
3 I'd like to say is it's a gap in
4 between -- because on one end the
5 Captain is saying we're making
6 limited progress. In order to make
7 sure we're having more than limited
8 progress, we would have to have
9 that RFP responded to and then the
10 whole operation get started where
11 the police have an opportunity to
12 police, and hopefully there will be
13 a team like it was before going on
14 more than likely the Sub and the El
15 as compared to the buses, just
16 checking on what's going on from
17 the quality of a person's
18 experience who's getting on the bus
19 and the El, would that be correct?

20 MR. SAUER: Yes. So
21 while we've transitioned between
22 the two contracts, the bulk of the
23 interactions has fallen either on
24 the police department or on the

1 limited partnerships that we have.
2 So part of the redeployment of
3 police resources to the trains that
4 we recently did was to address some
5 of those quality-of-ride issues
6 that you're speaking of today.
7 And, that is, folks who are riding
8 with no destination, who need help,
9 they need resources. And so, our
10 police officers are engaging those
11 folks and offering those resources
12 while helping them to move through
13 the system. But, yes, all that is
14 happening within the police
15 department.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

17 JOHNSON: Just a question for the
18 Captain and then I'll turn it over
19 to my members. What does a day
20 look like for officers who actually
21 frequently check in from railroad
22 car to railroad car on the El and
23 the Subway? And the reason why I
24 ask that question is because I do

1 get individuals reaching out
2 saying, I was on my way to work
3 today -- I know my staff probably
4 heard me because he was one of
5 them. I was on my way to work and
6 people are getting high on the
7 train, people are getting high on
8 the El, and I have to deal with
9 this while I'm on the train and
10 while I'm on the El, right. So I'm
11 like okay.

12 And we have people come
13 down to Council and say, oh, SEPTA,
14 at the end of the day, like it's
15 this magical thing we need to be a
16 part of, where I didn't grow up
17 with a car in my household, to be
18 quite frank with you and everybody
19 inside this room. The transit mode
20 every day was SEPTA. It was the
21 29. It was the famous 17 bus to
22 this day, right, the 7 bus growing
23 up in South Philly. But also, I
24 know that Broad Street Line like

1 the back of my hand, so it's
2 nothing new to me to know the train
3 station particularly from Pattison
4 Avenue. Because I'm from South
5 Philly, we pretty much used to stop
6 at City Hall. But I know under
7 Walnut Street, you know, as a kid
8 riding my bike under there, but
9 that's a different conversation,
10 right. So I know it back and
11 forth, right as well as the
12 Frankford Line because we used to
13 go to the Frankford Mall back in
14 the day. You would take the El to
15 Martha Orthodox coming from South
16 Philadelphia.

17 But I understand it's a
18 very different experience today
19 than it was back then. I know a
20 key aspect is that visibility of
21 police presence to try to tell
22 folks, you're not going to get
23 high, you're not going to rob,
24 you're not going to do all those

1 things to tear down the quality of
2 life and you have a choice to make.
3 Either you straighten up and get in
4 line or you will not be on this
5 transit system, because you got
6 children that's on these buses on
7 the El, you have seniors.

8 And so, I think a couple
9 bad apples, you know, I'm going to
10 call a spade a spade, have to be
11 dealt with on behalf of the
12 interests of everybody else who's
13 good, law-abiding transit riders.
14 So we're not going to help the
15 people that's on there doing wrong.
16 And if you need mental health issue
17 support, we will provide mental
18 health support. But you will not
19 disturb my little nieces and
20 nephews who are getting on the
21 Subway and on the El, period. And
22 I don't apologize for that approach
23 at all.

24 CHIEF LAWSON: Yeah. So

1 the success that we've had with
2 serious crime on the system has
3 really allowed us to turn the full
4 weight of our attention to those
5 quality-of-life issues. Serious
6 crime is not happening largely on
7 the train, right. So we were
8 spending a lot of time off the
9 train focusing on serious crime.

10 Now that we have that
11 under control, all of our time is
12 being spent on trains. I'll give
13 you an example of a weekly report
14 that we run last week. 200 train
15 runs, 1100 hours of patrol, just
16 cops on trains, and that's what
17 they're doing. They're enforcing
18 largely our code of conduct, right.
19 So smoking, open containers of
20 alcohol, taking up more than one
21 seat, these issues that are really
22 not criminal in nature, but they
23 lose their rights and that's
24 exactly our approach. And so, you

1 lost your ride. Some of these
2 issues result in a 24-hour ban.
3 And so, we ban them for the day
4 depending on how serious the
5 infraction was, but that's been our
6 approach. We've been seeing that
7 translate into a little better
8 feedback from our customers, right.
9 This is a fairly new plan. We've
10 been doing this for about a month,
11 but we're already seeing results
12 from it.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

14 JOHNSON: And how are we dealing
15 with -- I think we're better than
16 New York, but they have this ride
17 fare -- I mean, not ride fare.
18 What is it called, fare evasion
19 equipment, where you try to hop the
20 turnstile -- well, they used to
21 have the bars down the bottom,
22 that's big, but you try to jump the
23 turnstile to get on the train for
24 free. Where are we in terms of

1 modern technology to actually stop
2 individuals who think it's okay to
3 ride the train for free?

4 MR. SAUER: So we've
5 completed installation of full-
6 height fare gates with full-height
7 doors, like saloon-style doors.
8 They are much, much harder, much
9 more difficult to defeat. It's not
10 to say they're impenetrable,
11 because there's still opportunities
12 there that we have to address. But
13 we've installed these gates at 10
14 locations, 10 stations already,
15 including City Hall Station, if
16 you've been through City Hall
17 Station.

18 They have made a
19 tremendous difference. We've seen
20 fare evasion at those stations drop
21 off anywhere from 40% to 75%. In
22 the budget that we're proposing
23 this year, we are proposing to
24 install those at 13 more stations,

1 which will assist in those areas.

2 But then there's also a project
3 that we're undertaking, which we'll
4 introduce later this year, to try
5 to harden the existing turnstile
6 infrastructure.

7 While we can't get the
8 full height fare gates at every
9 location right away, we can harden
10 some of the infrastructure that we
11 have to make it more difficult for
12 folks to not pay their fare. And
13 we couple that with the Chief's
14 police deployment, which even
15 presses down on that number even
16 further. The police officers have
17 issued thousands of citations to
18 folks who are fare evading. We
19 always give them a chance to go
20 back out and come back through on a
21 fare. But if they insist, then the
22 police will issue a citation.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

24 JOHNSON: And last but not least,

1 how are we protecting our SEPTA
2 workers who are on the buses? How
3 do we deal with the Local 234 type
4 of issues where the SEPTA drivers
5 are pretty much doing their job,
6 but a lot of times they have to
7 deal with a variety of different
8 things that really has nothing to
9 do with them, but it just comes
10 with the job of them being a SEPTA
11 bus driver?

12 MR. SAUER: There --

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

14 JOHNSON: We want to put the
15 plastic shield that will be around
16 the actual bus drivers to keep them
17 safe, right, hopefully bulletproof.

18 MR. SAUER: Yes. So
19 there's several modifications we've
20 made structurally to the bus to
21 protect the operator. So the
22 shield that you're speaking of, so
23 we have evolved from a three-
24 quarter type shield that they can

1 retract at on demand. We've now
2 introduced a fully-encapsulated
3 driver compartment, where the
4 shield now goes from the rear of
5 the operator all the way to near
6 the window. It's very difficult
7 for someone who wants to get back
8 there to do it simultaneously.
9 We've enhanced the communications
10 for operators.

11 They have silent alarms
12 that they can trigger to get police
13 response. That silent alarm would
14 automatically go into our control
15 center. The control center can see
16 where the vehicle is by GPS. It
17 opens an ambient mic, we can
18 listen. The police have
19 capabilities now to look in live
20 through the camera system.

21 We also created or
22 modified the bus to include an
23 emergency egress window to the
24 operator's left. There's not a

1 door there so the operator would
2 technically be trapped, should they
3 not be able to exit through the
4 same door that the customers use.
5 Now, the operator could, in an
6 emergency, get out through that
7 window.

8 So we've made a number
9 of modifications to the bus itself.
10 We are still looking at bullet-
11 resistant glass. That glass does
12 present some engineering challenges
13 for us because it's very heavy, so
14 we're still working through those
15 challenges. But the full
16 encapsulation and the enhanced
17 communications have been pretty
18 well-received, and we have worked
19 hand-in-hand with Local 234 to
20 develop these ideas as we've gone
21 along.

22 I'll let the Chief -- if
23 you don't mind, the Chief has
24 strategies he's used to address

1 buses and trolleys as well.

2 CHIEF LAWSON: Yeah.

3 For the first time a year ago, we
4 created a unit within the police
5 department that focused on nothing
6 but our service transportation.
7 You've never had that in the past.
8 That group has been instrumental in
9 reducing crime on buses 16% last
10 year, but they've also reduced
11 assaults on our bus operators,
12 physical assaults on the operators.
13 Not only is it coming down, but
14 they've given that allows now the
15 surface group and our operators and
16 that team, a specific leadership
17 team, to work with in the police
18 department that addresses nothing
19 but their issues.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

21 JOHNSON: Okay. I just want to
22 recommend that you and your team
23 show these updates to Senator
24 McCormick -- I'm sorry, not

1 McCormick, Senator Pittman. We can
2 do McCormick as well so we can get
3 some of that federal funding as
4 well. But I would have that
5 conversation with Senator McCormick
6 and a variety of different Senators
7 who pretty much have final say on
8 the budget in Harrisburg. And show
9 that, one, our numbers reflect that
10 we are making progress. Two, these
11 are things that we're addressing
12 regarding fare evasion. And three,
13 here's the strategy regarding --
14 well, not even just the strategy,
15 but the progress we have been
16 making in terms of safety of the
17 ridership as well as those who
18 operate all of our buses and
19 trains.

20 I just think that goes a
21 long way when we're doing our
22 advocacy up there and we're
23 fighting -- that was direct
24 conversation that they would have.

1 That was the reason they would come
2 up with why they couldn't support
3 us. Whether we want to believe it
4 or not, they're the ones in power
5 that's going to approve the budget
6 so we have to make our case to them
7 that what they may think is the
8 case isn't necessarily the case,
9 and here's the facts and here's the
10 progress that we are making as a
11 transit authority.

12 With that being said,
13 the Chair recognizes Councilmember
14 Majority Leader Katherine Gilmore
15 Richardson, then Chair of
16 Transportation Mike Driscoll, and
17 then Councilmember Rue Landau and
18 Kendra Brooks.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE
20 RICHARDSON: Thank you. Thank you
21 so much, Council President.

22 And thank you, Scott
23 Sauer and your entire team. We
24 appreciate the work that you all

1 continue to do on our behalf, Chief
2 Lawson, Michael Carroll, all the
3 SEPTA Board members led by Board
4 Chair Ken Lawrence. Wendy Green
5 Harvey, thank you, thank you, thank
6 you. Thank you for always being
7 there for all of our calls and
8 requests. And also, to the new bus
9 network team for your
10 collaboration.

11 I'm going back a couple
12 years now, but I wanted to say
13 thank you again based on the work
14 with the new bus network. And I
15 know that there were several
16 iterations. And now, you're ready
17 to proceed with this new bus
18 network. Can you provide an update
19 on the implementation and how you
20 all will be working to ensure all
21 riders, but especially the ones
22 that are hard to reach, like our
23 seniors, our students, working
24 parents will be notified about the

1 bus network changes?

2 MR. SAUER: Sure. Thank
3 you for that. So today we are
4 kicking off our first hearing for
5 the Annual Service Plan, which is
6 just highlighting of course the New
7 Bus Network. And so, a couple
8 things that we learned -- actually
9 we learned a great deal last year
10 during the phases of the service
11 cuts that we were implementing as a
12 result of our budget issues.

13 And as we were going
14 through that process, we deployed
15 staff actually out to bus stops to
16 talk to riders on the ground, where
17 they live waiting for our service.
18 And what we found is that really
19 made a difference in folks' ability
20 to understand what we were doing.
21 As you well know, the service cuts
22 was a drastic change from what
23 people were accustomed to, even
24 well beyond what we're doing on the

1 New Bus Network.

2 So we really wanted to
3 make sure that people understood
4 what those changes meant for them
5 and their daily commute. And by
6 getting out in the field with
7 riders at the bus stop really made
8 a difference. So we have taken
9 that lesson and applied it as we
10 move through the New Bus Network.
11 So the bus network is going to be
12 implemented in several phases for
13 the next 18 to 24 months.

14 And so, what we are
15 taking is we're taking each phase
16 as kind of an implementation
17 process, a means to get out and
18 talk to the folks. And since most
19 of the phases work regionally
20 within the network, we're able to
21 target specific areas of the city
22 and the region to talk to them
23 about what's changing in that
24 phase. So we don't have to really

1 inundate them with all of it all at
2 once.

3 I mean, it's great if
4 they want to know it and that
5 information will be available. But
6 when we're out talking about
7 changes, generally we're going to
8 talk to people about the changes
9 that they're going to see every
10 day, because it's their bus route,
11 it's their rail route and it's
12 going to change their connections
13 and that sort of thing. So we are
14 talking to them about that as the
15 phases go. We've already done a
16 number of town halls and a number
17 of open houses before today in
18 advance of the first implementation
19 phase, which starts in August.

20 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

21 RICHARDSON: And I'm sure with the
22 bus operators as well. Shout-out
23 to TWU 234.

24 MR. SAUER: Yes, and

1 thank you for that. But, yes,
2 absolutely. So we have spoken of
3 course with TWU's leadership and
4 going depot-by-depot to talk to the
5 operators about what's happening in
6 their depot, because some of these
7 changes obviously are happening on
8 a depot-by-depot basis.

9 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

10 RICHARDSON: Right.

11 MR. SAUER: That was
12 some of the feedback I got last
13 year during the cuts. As I was
14 going depot-to-depot telling them
15 about what was happening, they were
16 bringing me to the board and
17 showing me how their roots were
18 changing. So we took those lessons
19 back and were applying those to the
20 New Bus Network implementation as
21 well. Yes, we're trying to address
22 every stakeholder, including
23 Council, including our county
24 leaders as well as to make sure

1 that everybody is well-informed and
2 that we can answer their questions
3 well before implementation actually
4 occurs.

5 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

6 RICHARDSON: Okay. That'll be
7 great. I heard the bell and I'll
8 honor the clock. But I just wanted
9 to put on the record please to
10 continue to send us the
11 information -- we'll receive it
12 from Wendy -- that we can share
13 with our constituents and our
14 E-newsletters. We're already
15 getting the information, but
16 continue to send it to us so we can
17 get it out to our board of
18 constituencies that we represent.

19 I will submit questions
20 for written response due to time
21 limitations relative to the
22 repurposing of the capital dollars
23 in that timeline. And also, what
24 you all have budgeted for capital

1 funding and what percentage of
2 those funds you encumber each year,
3 what percentage you actually spend?
4 And then also on the revenue side,
5 around passenger revenue and sort
6 of what you anticipate from a
7 budget perspective on passenger
8 revenue moving forward,
9 particularly starting with 2026?

10 I'll submit those
11 questions for written response.
12 But just wanted to say thank you
13 for your continued work and
14 advocacy and working together with
15 this body, with Council President,
16 our Chair of Transportation, and
17 advocating on behalf of
18 Philadelphia in Harrisburg. So
19 thank you very much for that work.

20 And I have to say this
21 too. Prez brought this up around
22 riding the bus, and I still call
23 the Broad Street bus the C bus.
24 Okay. I think it's 4 now, but I

1 think it was the C when I was in
2 high school. I'm just going to be
3 honest, completely honest, and I
4 usually don't even do this on the
5 record. I don't like the new LBT.
6 I don't like that, because I think
7 that you all are trying to make
8 SEPTA more so like the New York bus
9 system. So I get it, L, the
10 Market-Frankford, B for Broad
11 Street. I get it, right. But to
12 me, it looks like New York. And I
13 think we have to be cognizant of
14 the fact that we are Philadelphia
15 and we need to keep the character
16 of our city at the forefront of the
17 work that we do.

18 So I just wanted to
19 mention that for the team and the
20 staff on the back-end. I know you
21 all got upset with me about this
22 last time. Who may or may not be
23 from Philadelphia, who may or may
24 not be born and raised here, to

1 remember the cultural and
2 historical significance of what our
3 transit system means to us. It
4 doesn't have to look like --
5 everything doesn't have to look
6 like New York City. We are
7 Philadelphia. Thank you.

8 (Applause.)

9 MR. SAUER: Fair enough.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

11 JOHNSON: Thank you, Majority
12 Leader.

13 Chair recognizes
14 Councilmember Mike Driscoll, Chair
15 of Transportation.

16 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

17 Thank you, Mr. President.

18 And welcome, Chief, and
19 welcome, Scott. Scott, I
20 appreciate that five-step plan that
21 you've outlined. Appreciate that,
22 but I wanted to ask before I get to
23 my questions, you're not new to
24 SEPTA. You've been there a long

1 time, both of you. And with all
2 your experience, what is your
3 vision for SEPTA going forward?

4 MR. SAUER: Sure. Thank
5 you for that. Last year we talked
6 a lot about what SEPTA will be if
7 we are not funded. And so, as we
8 shifted away from that, even though
9 it's a temporary solution, I wanted
10 to shift the language and I want to
11 talk about what SEPTA can be if we
12 are funded. If we get a permanent
13 funding solution and we do all the
14 things that we want to do with
15 SEPTA, the things that our
16 customers and that Council wants us
17 to do, this is what we can be.

18 And what that vision
19 looks like is it looks like a
20 system that is modern. It runs
21 frequent, reliable service. It's
22 service that will arrive regardless
23 of whether you have a printed
24 timetable in your hand or a digital

1 timetable on your electronic
2 device, that I can just show up at
3 the street corner and I know that
4 bus will arrive within 15 minutes
5 or I know that that train will
6 arrive within 15 minutes.

7 I want a system that
8 that our workforce is well-trained,
9 highly-skilled, that they are
10 attentive to our customers' needs
11 and that they know what's expected
12 of them and that they perform to
13 that expectation every single day,
14 a system that is clean, a system
15 that folks can get in and be proud
16 of, that they'll bring visitors
17 from, from other cities or other
18 countries and that we don't have to
19 try to spruce up in order to meet
20 that demand. We're already there.

21 It's kind of the same
22 approach you would want to have in
23 your own home where I don't want to
24 have to clean my home just because

1 somebody dropped by. I want it to
2 be clean and ready to receive
3 company any time I need it. I want
4 that for the people that use it
5 every day. I want that for
6 visitors. In order to get there,
7 we have to change the way we do
8 business internally. So I need a
9 leadership team that is responsive
10 and that is meeting needs and
11 looking ahead strategically, and
12 that's the point of this strategic
13 business plan initiative. It's the
14 point of the vision document, to
15 show what SEPTA can be.

16 We have a real
17 opportunity. Because over the next
18 5 to 10 years, we're going to have
19 at least three modern rail fleets
20 coming onto the property, the
21 trolleys, the Market-Frankford Line
22 and the Silverliner VIs. We have
23 an opportunity to fast-forward into
24 the 21st century in a way that

1 SEPTA has never done before. We've
2 never procured three major rail
3 fleets all at once the way we're
4 going to try to do, and we still
5 have to do the Broad Street Line.

6 So we still have a ways
7 to go. But in 5 to 10 years, it's
8 going to happen whether we like it
9 or not and we have to be ready for
10 it. And that means all the
11 infrastructure. I want to have a
12 system where our platforms are all
13 high level on Regional Rail. I
14 want to be able to board in a light
15 as quickly as we can. I don't want
16 to be compared to Europe and Asia
17 and be told, how come you guys
18 can't be like them.

19 I want people to say,
20 hey, you got to ride in Philly
21 because that's the way their system
22 is. I want to be better than New
23 York City. I don't want to be New
24 York City any more than the

1 Councilmember wants to be New York
2 City. I want New York City to look
3 at Philadelphia and say, we want to
4 be like Philly. So that's our
5 vision, and we have a path to get
6 there.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

8 JOHNSON: Zohran is offering free
9 bus rides though. So I mean, zero
10 fare is great but he's talking
11 about all free, like just get on
12 the bus and go as you please.

13 MR. SAUER: We don't
14 need Zohran. We have Mayor Parker.
15 We don't need Zohran.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

17 JOHNSON: I know that's right. Say
18 it again, One City. That's what
19 I'm talking about.

20 MR. SAUER: That's what
21 I want for SEPTA and that's what I
22 want for Philly.

23 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

24 Well, I think that's what we want,

1 so we appreciate you articulating
2 that. Real quick -- Mr. President,
3 just a couple questions -- to
4 follow up on your question, there's
5 full height fare gates. You said
6 maybe between 45% and 70% we're
7 achieving that. Not necessarily
8 today, but can you translate that
9 into real revenue projections for
10 us?

11 MR. SAUER: So we were
12 projecting -- we were losing about
13 \$50 million annually in fare
14 evasion. Now, that's system-wide.
15 So if you just annotate that into
16 those individual systems, those
17 individual stations, assuming that,
18 say, 1000 people come through that
19 station, then they're all paying --
20 just for the sake of round numbers,
21 let's call it \$3, that's \$3,000.
22 So if we were missing 50% of that
23 revenue and now we've reduced that
24 50% number to, say, 25%, that's a

1 significant savings station-by-
2 station.

3 And some of those
4 stations are much busier than
5 others. City Hall Station, for
6 example, where the gates have been
7 going in, that's the hub of the
8 wheel, if you will. So we are
9 seeing tremendous system-wide fare
10 evasion has dropped by about 10%.
11 Now, that takes into account also
12 that our fares went up last year.
13 So the raw number might be higher,
14 but 10% fewer people are evading
15 the fare system-wide. And at those
16 stations, half, sometimes three-
17 quarters fewer are evading the fare
18 thanks in large part to the
19 infrastructure hardening, plus the
20 attention that the transit police
21 gives.

22 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:
23 This is why I think it's very
24 important. And Council President

1 and the folks who went to
2 Harrisburg with us last budget
3 season, the Republican Senate kept
4 harping on those opportunities that
5 we're not recovering. So as we are
6 giving you more money to increase
7 those stations, I think that's
8 important in this budget, that we
9 can go back to them and say, we
10 hear you and we are doing something
11 about that.

12 Real quick, can you tell
13 us about -- I know with
14 Silverliners, you had to do all
15 those and you were under tremendous
16 pressure. Where are we at with all
17 that?

18 MR. SAUER: So the
19 really good news is we had a target
20 of return of getting back to daily
21 about 200 Silverliners back in
22 service every day. And we have
23 achieved that. The number drops
24 off from time to time because we

1 were very cautious with the
2 equipment. But every day, we put
3 out roughly between 180 and 200
4 Silverliners. And that was our
5 goal.

6 223 worth was the fleet
7 of Silverliner IVs. We were able
8 to achieve all the inspections. We
9 were able to achieve all the
10 repairs, but for about 10 cars that
11 are sitting out with long lead time
12 items, but we were able to achieve
13 that in short order. Now, we
14 didn't do a good job and that's
15 what got us into that mess.

16 But what we have done
17 systematically over the last six
18 months is we've changed the
19 leadership of that organization
20 within SEPTA. We've changed our
21 approach. We've added standard
22 operating procedures. We've added
23 more training. And the best part
24 of it is our workforce really

1 stepped up. They gave us so much
2 time and effort over the course of
3 those three or four months to get
4 us back to a place where at least
5 now we can show better reliability.

6 There are still going to
7 be days when our Regional Rail
8 customers may have to board a train
9 that only has two cars. But every
10 day we shoot to have three and four
11 car consists on the trains every
12 day and we continue to aim for that
13 goal. We can't say it'll be
14 perfect. It won't be perfect until
15 we get a new fleet. This is an old
16 fleet. It needs some real TLC, and
17 that's what we're going to do for
18 it, at least for the foreseeable
19 future until the new fleet begins
20 to arrive. But we're there. We
21 are in a much better place today
22 than we were even back in January.

23 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:
24 Well, thanks to your team for that.

1 I know you were working around the
2 clock. Appreciate that. So
3 prepandemic to now, where are we at
4 in ridership?

5 MR. SAUER: So we've
6 shown about a growth over the last
7 four years every single month but
8 for a couple months at the end of
9 last year with the difficulties we
10 were having. But overall, we are
11 showing about close to 80% of what
12 we were prior to the pandemic.
13 We're still running only about 90%
14 of the service that we ran prior to
15 the pandemic. So we are still
16 growing.

17 We saw growth last
18 month. We're back into a growth
19 phase again, coming away from the
20 Regional Rail issues. So we're
21 back into a growth phase. We have
22 very aggressive ideas on how to
23 grow ridership through the Key
24 Advantage program as the city is

1 part of through Zero Fare, through
2 other fare, more ridership-focused
3 programs to try to lure in.

4 The best advertising for
5 getting people back on SEPTA is to
6 improve our service, and that's
7 what we have to do and that's what
8 our goal is as we push through
9 every single day, is to improve the
10 service, make it reliable, make it
11 safe, make it clean, and that's
12 what will bring people back. When
13 our customers get out and talk to
14 people and say, hey, I ride SEPTA
15 every day, I don't have any
16 problems, it's always okay. That's
17 the best advertising we can have,
18 and that's what we shoot for.

19 Our customer surveys all
20 show that the people who are
21 riding, the people who respond to
22 our surveys are seeing improvement.
23 They've also seen places that we
24 can do better. That's how we're

1 going to grow ridership, and that
2 is what our goal is, is to get back
3 to 100% and beyond. We were
4 growing until about 2013 and then
5 over the years ridership started to
6 dip.

7 There were a lot of
8 factors why that is. People were,
9 you know, remote work was a thing
10 even before 2020, but it was
11 generally one day a week. And we
12 saw that on Fridays. We saw that
13 dip on Fridays. So we saw where
14 things were starting to tinker off.
15 The introduction of rideshare,
16 TNCs, we took a hit on that as
17 well. We are trying to recover
18 that ridership. We're trying to do
19 it in ways that make the system
20 more attractive, the New Bus
21 Network, trolley modernization.

22 All the things that
23 we're doing to try to speed up bus
24 service, the AI cameras, the

1 enforcement cameras, the dedicated
2 bus lanes, they were all part of a
3 strategy to get people back on the
4 system. And all the things we've
5 done for bus service have actually
6 shown bus ridership to grow faster
7 than our other modes. Bus service
8 is almost all the way back and
9 that's really encouraging. So we
10 know we can get there.

11 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

12 That's great. I mean, look, I know
13 prepandemic the world changed
14 because people are working from
15 home. I get all that, but it
16 sounds like we're on the right
17 direction. Lastly, are we ready
18 for 250? And the second part of
19 that question is other cities are
20 contemplating special fares. What
21 are your thoughts on that?

22 MR. SAUER: So we're
23 working with the organizers on
24 fare-related issues, right. So I'm

1 not prepared to tell you exactly
2 what that is because that
3 announcement is coming, but we are
4 working with organizers on fare, on
5 special fares and things like that
6 to support the events. But the
7 short answer is we've been
8 preparing for this since it was
9 proposed. I'm a soccer fan, so I
10 was excited about this.

11 As soon as it became a
12 thing, we wanted to, we want to do
13 this. SEPTA does big things. We
14 do big events and we do them well.
15 We did the Eagles parade a couple
16 seasons ago and we brought 400,000
17 people in and we took 400,000
18 people out and we did it without
19 incident, and we did it safely and
20 efficiently. We can do big things
21 and we're excited to do this.

22 We have plans for
23 enhanced service on the Broad
24 Street Line. We have plans for

1 enhanced service on a couple of our
2 bus routes that are going to serve
3 the Fan Fest. We have plans for
4 ambassadors to be out and about, in
5 the field directing folks, guiding
6 them back and forth through
7 services.

8 The difference between
9 an event of this magnitude in the
10 summer versus an Eagles parade,
11 people are going to be kind of
12 everywhere all at once, going here
13 and there, whereas the Eagles
14 parade it was everybody coming in
15 and everybody going out. And that
16 makes it much more challenging for
17 us, but we're ready to meet that
18 challenge and we've been planning
19 for this for several years and it's
20 even more intense now as we inch
21 ever closer to it.

22 We've already supported
23 the Flower Show. That was kind of
24 the kickoff of our 2026 schedule of

1 events. We supported March
2 Madness, Phillies opening day. As
3 these events start to kick off,
4 we're exercising that muscle to
5 really kind of get ready for the
6 big one when it starts in June.
7 We're excited to provide that
8 service and I think we're ready.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

10 JOHNSON: Thank you very much. I
11 also want to acknowledge the
12 presence, I didn't see him earlier,
13 Michael Carroll, who's the head of
14 OTIS, which is the key lead
15 organization that brings everybody
16 together when it comes to
17 infrastructure, transportation and
18 sustainability, so always a
19 pleasure to see you.

20 We were just down at the
21 Bellwether District on the Lower
22 South Plan with all the key
23 institutions to talk about how the
24 2nd Councilmanic District is a key

1 part of regional growth as we move
2 forward in the City of Philadelphia
3 in partnership with our Mayor. So
4 it's always good to see you, Mike.

5 At this time, the Chair
6 recognizes Councilmember Landau,
7 Minority Leader Kendra Brooks and
8 Councilmember Cindy Bass.

9 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

10 Thank you, Council President.

11 Thank you for being
12 here. Yay, SEPTA. Quick follow-
13 up. I heard that Councilmember
14 Driscoll already asked, but my most
15 recent time of riding SEPTA was
16 this past weekend. Pretty good
17 with the cleanliness. I was pretty
18 impressed, smelled good and
19 everything. But underneath the
20 Clothespin did not at all. Smelled
21 a lot like urine.

22 And I was curious if
23 SEPTA has any plans or would be
24 willing to have some plans of down

1 there, especially the businesses
2 are not up and running right now,
3 of having those new Porta Potty
4 things, I forget what we're calling
5 them, but having those down there
6 so people could actually use the
7 bathroom?

8 MR. SAUER: So we
9 generally don't do public
10 restrooms, but for specific
11 locations, our biggest hubs. Part
12 of the reason for that is those
13 restrooms need ongoing attention,
14 and we have dedicated cleaners to
15 those restroom facilities because
16 they are only in several different
17 locations.

18 Now, for big events we
19 have done portable toilets at some
20 of the really big stuff that we've
21 done, like for the Papal visit, for
22 example, some of those bigger
23 events. But placing restrooms in a
24 particular facility for us would be

1 problematic for a number of ways,
2 but certainly staffing it. But
3 then one location versus another,
4 folks will certainly, you know, why
5 not us. We would get into kind of
6 envy, class envy kind of thing,
7 they got bathrooms and we don't.
8 It would really stretch our
9 cleaning and security resources.

10 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: So
11 maybe you could talk to the city
12 about putting --

13 MR. SAUER: We can
14 certainly do that. We can
15 certainly do that.

16 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:
17 Okay. Thank you. So I wanted to
18 talk a little bit about Zero Fare,
19 which I know that my colleague
20 Nicolas O'Rourke has been
21 championing as well. Apologies
22 that I had to step out for a
23 minute. I'm very relieved to see
24 that the Mayor put Zero Fare back

1 into the budget this year.

2 But with the \$25 million
3 allocation, what's the estimate on
4 how many Philadelphians can be
5 provided with Zero Fare cards? And
6 is this an increase from last
7 year's participants? Is it
8 comparable to last year or is it an
9 increase?

10 MR. SAUER: So there's
11 about 68,000 eligible recipients of
12 the Zero Fare program. And that's
13 170% more than what was in the
14 original program. The original
15 program, if you remember, was about
16 25,000. So there's been a
17 significant uptick in the number of
18 recipients of the Zero Fare
19 program.

20 And what we know from
21 when we've put in these sorts of
22 programs is it doesn't just give
23 people who would ride anyway an
24 opportunity to ride, but it gives

1 people who maybe wouldn't ride
2 because of that restriction. Now,
3 they might ride because they have a
4 fare card in their hand. And
5 that's true of Zero Fare. It's
6 true of Key Advantage and we've
7 seen it, that it does induce new
8 ridership for folks who now have
9 something in their hand. So, yes,
10 it's been an exponential uptick in
11 the number of recipients in the
12 program through the funding levels
13 that have been provided.

14 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: If
15 the program serves Philadelphians
16 under 150% of the federal poverty
17 rate, but that's something like
18 500,000 Philadelphians so --

19 MR. SAUER: It is
20 limited. It is certainly limited.
21 I mean, but we certainly appreciate
22 the effort that Council and the
23 City are making towards getting
24 more people into the program. But

1 you're right, it doesn't address
2 everyone.

3 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:
4 What would it take to expand the
5 program?

6 MR. SAUER: Well, it
7 takes ongoing discussions with the
8 city and figuring out what levels
9 of funding would like to be
10 provided.

11 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:
12 Okay.

13 MR. SAUER: For every
14 card that gets funded, we'll
15 provide it. We have capacity. We
16 can take those riders. We
17 certainly have the capacity to take
18 that. It's just a matter of
19 deciding how we're going to fund it
20 and at what level.

21 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:
22 Okay. I want to ask also about
23 student fares, which I've been
24 asking almost every year. I

1 introduced a resolution September
2 2024 to expand student fares to
3 weekends and evenings. Currently,
4 student fares are only valid from
5 5:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. weekdays and
6 for students who live 1.5 miles or
7 more from a school with a \$10
8 charge if the student needs to take
9 the Regional Rail.

10 Students are more than
11 just students now. They have to go
12 to work. They go to their
13 afterschool programs. They go to
14 all of the amazing job training
15 programs that we have in the city,
16 many of which are supported by City
17 Council. And we want them to be
18 able to access these things and
19 sometimes they need to come home
20 after 8 o'clock. Sometimes their
21 job is on their weekends. We don't
22 want them taking money out of their
23 weekend paychecks to do this.

24 So can you share any

1 more insight on your openness and
2 conversation with the school
3 district in expanding student fare
4 passes to more students and more
5 times the week and year? And what
6 can we do to help?

7 MR. SAUER: Sure. First
8 off, I'll say that SEPTA is very
9 proud to be the transportation
10 provider for the School District of
11 Philadelphia. And we know that
12 there's about 52,000 kids that are
13 on SEPTA every single day. We
14 provide these passes. Essentially,
15 the Commonwealth provides the
16 funding to the school district who
17 then pays SEPTA for the fare
18 instruments.

19 We're aware of the
20 restrictions on the cards, and
21 SEPTA is open to providing
22 transportation any hour, any day
23 for anyone. And so, what it would
24 take to get there, and truth be

1 told, we've not had this specific
2 conversation with the school
3 district, but we certainly could
4 initiate this.

5 What it would take
6 essentially is more funding,
7 because we give a discount on the
8 card because of its restrictions.
9 So if we open the card to more
10 hours, we would of course raise the
11 fare to the school district,
12 essentially raising the fare to the
13 Commonwealth and then they would
14 provide that funding to us, and we
15 could unlock that card for any
16 time, any day. Again, it comes
17 back to what I said earlier, we
18 have the capacity to introduce
19 this.

20 And we also know that by
21 introducing students at an early
22 age to use mass transit, to ride
23 mass transit, they learn how to
24 take care of themselves, how to

1 move, how to transport themselves,
2 from here to there. They become
3 much more responsible citizens.
4 They become good citizens for us
5 and for the future. We want to be
6 part of that and we're happy to do
7 what it takes to get there. What
8 it will take is funding for that
9 program.

10 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

11 Okay. Thank you. I'll hold my
12 next one for the next round. Thank
13 you very much.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

15 JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

16 Chair recognizes
17 Councilmember Kendra Brooks,
18 Councilmember Cindy Bass who's near
19 and dear to SEPTA, and then
20 Councilmember Dr. Nina Ahmad.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:

22 Thank you so much, Council
23 President.

24 Thank you, SEPTA, for

1 coming out and taking our
2 questions. My first question is,
3 is SEPTA willing to engage in a
4 strategic partnership with
5 rideshare companies to help
6 optimize service delivery for
7 riders with accessibility needs?

8 MR. SAUER: The short
9 answer is yes, we are. We are open
10 to that idea. And we have engaged
11 rideshare companies on this, on
12 this approach a few times over the
13 years. In the early parts of the
14 rideshare kind of phase, there were
15 some federal restrictions on how we
16 could use rideshares. There are
17 still some federal hurdles we have
18 to overcome that apply to our
19 drivers, because we are recipients
20 of federal dollars so our drivers
21 are subject to some federal
22 requirements, such as drug and
23 alcohol testing and so on. So we
24 have to overcome some of those

1 challenges.

2 But, yes, we are very
3 much open. In fact, I would say
4 we're more than open because we
5 know that we have our own
6 challenges in meeting the demand
7 for our paratransit and our shared
8 ride customers, so we have very
9 limited resources for drivers and
10 availability, and that does reveal
11 itself in some of the customer
12 dissatisfaction in the service
13 we're providing. So we are open to
14 engaging with TNCs to the extent
15 possible and getting them to become
16 part of the SEPTA system.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:

18 Oh, that's great news. My next
19 question is about SEPTA's Key
20 Advantage. We think it's a great
21 program and it helps Philadelphia
22 and saves money on transportation
23 and helps businesses lower cost and
24 it helps keep our buses safer with

1 increased ridership. I want to
2 thank you for working with City
3 Council to create and expand this
4 program.

5 Can you tell us about
6 the participation levels in this
7 program and how has the Key
8 Advantage participation changed
9 over the past year? And how about
10 the preceding three years?

11 MR. SAUER: So Key
12 Advantage started with a couple
13 pilot companies, some of the bigger
14 organizations in the region, and
15 many of them have remained
16 customers. And again, it comes
17 down to for us, it's providing
18 transit to the organization. So
19 they in turn provide that fare to
20 their employees as an employment
21 benefit. We have some really large
22 partners as part of that, and
23 there's a number of programs that
24 engage in that.

1 And I'm looking for --
2 so at the current participation
3 levels, funding is about 22 million
4 annually so that's new revenues
5 that we may not otherwise have.
6 And again, it comes down to
7 inducing ridership. What we've
8 learned as we've engaged with our
9 partners in this program is when
10 someone has a fare card in their
11 hand, they're much more likely to
12 use it and that puts more people on
13 transit and fewer people on our
14 roadways.

15 We have some really big
16 partners, Penn Medicine being one
17 of them, who has been with us from
18 the beginning. We have engaged
19 with landlords to have them engage
20 with renters. We are looking for
21 some of the bigger partners. I've
22 already spoken with folks at Temple
23 University, for example, to try to
24 bring them into the fold.

1 Community College of Philadelphia,
2 we've done a program with them for
3 the West Philly campus. So there's
4 a number of these institutions in
5 Philly that have engaged with us
6 and continue to engage with us to
7 get them involved. So there's a
8 lot to do there.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Do
10 you have any ideas of how we can
11 increase participation in the
12 program? And to the thought of
13 CCP, what is the partnership with
14 CCP and does it include students,
15 especially students that receive
16 the CATTO scholarship?

17 MR. SAUER: So the CCP
18 relationship, we were both parties
19 or have been engaged in
20 negotiations to figure out how to
21 expand that partnership. I know
22 that's been very public, but the
23 truth of the matter is we have been
24 speaking with Community College to

1 try to expand their footprint in
2 the program, how they engage,
3 whether it's the full student
4 population, because many of their
5 students are part-time so they're
6 looking at what that means to them
7 and how they can engage in that,
8 but that's a decision that the
9 Community College will make. And
10 we're in discussions with them now
11 in how to help them arrive at a
12 good decision.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:

14 Thank you so much.

15 MR. SAUER: Certainly.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

17 JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

18 Chair recognizes

19 Councilmember Cindy Bass, then
20 Councilmember Dr. Nina Ahmad, then
21 Councilmember Anthony Phillips.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:

23 Thank you, Mr. President.

24 I just wanted to -- I

1 had a couple of questions, but I
2 wanted to start off to go back to
3 Councilmember Kathy Gilmore
4 Richardson's point about the
5 changes to SEPTA -- hello. How are
6 you, sir?

7 MR. SAUER: How are you?

8 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good
9 to see you. But I wanted to go to
10 her point about the changes to
11 SEPTA. I wanted to ask, and I'll
12 ask specifically for those of us
13 who grew up sort of like North
14 Philly and South Philly.

15 Councilmember Brooks, Council
16 President Johnson, what was the bus
17 line that ran up and down Broad
18 Street? What was that bus?

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

20 JOHNSON: The C.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Does
22 anybody know what the bus that goes
23 up and down Broad Street is now?

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

1 JOHNSON: No.

2 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: No.

3 MR. SAUER: Somebody
4 knows.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: And
6 so, the point I'm making here is we
7 still call it the C bus. You know,
8 you change the name, you change
9 some of the scope of service on it.
10 For most of us, it's kind of I'm
11 going to catch the C bus and go
12 down to South Philly or up to North
13 Philly or whatever, and it remains.
14 So we've spent a lot of money on
15 these changes that a lot of
16 Philadelphians really have not
17 embraced. And I'm someone who grew
18 up in the city catching SEPTA. I
19 know how to get to every part of
20 the city thanks to SEPTA. I used
21 to take the 48, the 33, the Route
22 60 to 54. Those were my North
23 Philly lines.

24 But because of those

1 lines and SEPTA's work, I know the
2 city so much better. Because
3 again, like the Council President,
4 we didn't have a car. SEPTA was
5 our car, so we have a lot of
6 respect for the work that you do.

7 Now, that being said, I
8 do have some concern in your
9 conversation. You mentioned the
10 funding crisis that threatened last
11 year, SEPTA service cuts, fare
12 increases and the like, which
13 really had all of us and the
14 legislators in Harrisburg extremely
15 nervous about what that was going
16 to mean for our constituents. But
17 then there was this article I came
18 across in the paper that we were
19 giving away five properties in very
20 desirable neighborhoods along the
21 Chestnut Hill East and the Chestnut
22 Hill West Line to a developer for
23 99 years for \$1. It was the first
24 of its kind agreement, and it

1 certainly should be the last of its
2 kind.

3 Also, I want to point
4 out that another piece of real
5 estate SEPTA owned was leased to a
6 developer in Ambler, and that was
7 just this year and they're paying
8 \$402,500 per year, with annual 3%
9 increases for a total of \$236
10 million going to SEPTA over 99
11 years. So help me understand, \$236
12 million or \$1. Help me understand.
13 Make it make sense.

14 MR. SAUER: Sure, I
15 would love to do that. So the two
16 examples are really vastly
17 different. What we leased for \$1
18 were the station buildings, not the
19 whole property. The station still
20 belongs to SEPTA, the station
21 building, which in many cases will
22 likely be transformed into some
23 retail space, coffee shop, food
24 service place, so that is a much

1 smaller investment for anyone than
2 the property that you're speaking
3 of out in Ambler or contract, where
4 it's an entire parcel that will be
5 developed into housing with a
6 parking garage and maybe retail.
7 So it is a little bit different in
8 the approach that we took.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: So I
10 have no doubt that it's different.
11 But at the same time, \$1 for five
12 properties is outrageous when
13 you're asking us for money. It is
14 outrageous that these kinds of
15 conversations are even being had
16 and that SEPTA is having the
17 financial cliff that threatens us
18 all. For those of us who ride
19 SEPTA now, who have ridden SEPTA
20 and respect the work that you all
21 are doing, for those of us who care
22 about public transportation, it is
23 really quite outrageous that SEPTA
24 would give away this very valuable

1 property on a very desirable line,
2 the Chestnut Hill East and the
3 Chestnut Hill West. I just really
4 cannot make sense of what has
5 happened here.

6 MR. SAUER: I certainly
7 understand your position. But what
8 I will say is we tried to lease
9 those properties individually and
10 we went through a bid process that
11 wound up at \$1. These
12 properties --

13 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: I'm
14 sorry and don't want to cut you
15 off, but I would say in saying that
16 you went through a bid process, we
17 were never contacted so I don't
18 know who you -- if you needed some
19 help or we're looking for some
20 minority participation. Because
21 the other thing I want to mention
22 is that there is no minority
23 participation on these properties,
24 and that is as well shameful when

1 you look at the overall ridership
2 that supports SEPTA day-to-day.

3 MR. SAUER: And
4 certainly, the first time that you
5 and I spoke about this, that was
6 one of your chief concerns, we had
7 not engaged you well enough. And I
8 acknowledge that that is probably
9 the case. So we have done a much
10 better job on the Germantown
11 property, for example, that I know
12 we've engaged you and your office a
13 great deal and you've given us
14 great feedback on that. So we are
15 learning from that lesson that you
16 pointed out to us on how better to
17 engage with Council, how better to
18 engage with your teams and the
19 communities. So, yes, certainly we
20 could have done much better in our
21 communications with you during that
22 process.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:
24 Okay. That doesn't fix.

1 MR. SAUER: Understood.

2 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: And
3 as I understand it, in our research
4 these were properties from the
5 original -- before it was SEPTA, it
6 was PTC?

7 MR. SAUER: Probably
8 long before. It's railroad
9 property. So it's likely
10 Pennsylvania Railroad or --

11 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: When
12 it was PTC, part of the
13 conversation that we've been
14 advised of is that the leasing of
15 these properties, there is some
16 question as to the legality of the
17 leasing of the properties because
18 they are actually PTC properties
19 that were leased to SEPTA. So
20 there is a question as to if these
21 properties could be sublet. And
22 so, that's a conversation that we
23 will have. But I just think the
24 optics of this really look horrific

1 for SEPTA. And again, we're out
2 here selling this product. And the
3 product is if you're connected, you
4 can get five properties for \$1 for
5 100 years. Sounds great if you're
6 in the loop, if you're on the end.

7 But for most of us, this
8 looks like somebody got a hook-up.
9 Plain and simple, somebody got a
10 hook-up. And as we're talking
11 about trying to put more money into
12 programs like Zero Fare, that's
13 where that money comes from, that's
14 where we get those dollars from.
15 So I know you get it. I know you
16 understand exactly where I'm coming
17 from. Because again, we have had
18 that conversation before.

19 Two other things I
20 wanted to mention just briefly, and
21 that is that SEPTA operators -- I
22 don't know if you know this or
23 not -- bus operators are being
24 blamed for tickets that if people

1 are in bus lanes and the bus
2 automatically gives them a ticket,
3 then the operator is assumed to
4 have done something, signaled them
5 somehow, caused that ticket to
6 happen. So we already have some
7 concern about keeping our operators
8 safe. That's something I think
9 that SEPTA really needs to look
10 into.

11 And the other thing
12 really quickly was, I was glad to
13 hear you say that you want clean
14 stations. You want your stations
15 to be clean at all times. It
16 shouldn't matter if somebody's
17 dropping by or whatever. The
18 station really just should be
19 clean. Because we had this
20 conversation previously with a
21 general manager who said, well,
22 we're doing the best we can. No,
23 that's the wrong answer. The
24 stations were pretty dirty. I'm

1 glad to hear you say that.

2 I do have a concern
3 about the lack of bathrooms in the
4 subway system. I can't remember
5 who mentioned that -- okay, Rue, my
6 colleague, Councilmember Landau.
7 Because I have a connection with
8 SEPTA in the subway system. As an
9 example, the elevator at the North
10 Philadelphia Station, which is
11 Broad and Lehigh, is constantly
12 broken. And it's broken because
13 people are using it as a restroom.
14 And so, SEPTA needs to figure out
15 how to get restrooms in the
16 stations. It's really just that
17 simple.

18 I know it's probably a
19 whole lot more expensive to send
20 out the mechanics to fix an
21 elevator that is eroding because
22 someone is urinating constantly in
23 the elevator system. So if SEPTA
24 could figure out how to make that

1 happen, I think in the long run
2 it's actually going to save you all
3 some money on those kinds of
4 repairs.

5 So thank you,
6 Mr. President. Those were my
7 questions.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
9 JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

10 Chair recognizes
11 Councilmember Dr. Nina Ahmad,
12 Councilmember Dr. Anthony Phillips,
13 then Councilmember Quetcy Lozada,
14 then Mr. O'Rourke.

15 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:
16 Thank you, Council President.
17 Good morning still,
18 almost. Good to see you all.
19 Thank you for all the work you do.
20 And once again, we recognize Wendy
21 who keeps us plugged in. I wanted
22 to go back to 2021. I know you
23 were not in this position, but you
24 were in SEPTA, as was many of you.

1 And there was that horrific sexual
2 assault that happened on a train
3 between here and Upper Derby to
4 69th Terminal. I was not elected
5 at that time.

6 I was the President of
7 the National Organization for
8 Women, the Pennsylvania Chapter,
9 and we had a rally that got on the
10 train and went from there to Upper
11 Darby to really talk about lack of
12 security, lack of issues. There
13 were some demands made then and I
14 just wanted to see what the follow-
15 up was around that. And mainly,
16 they were about monitoring those
17 cameras with live people. And they
18 had cameras then, but nobody saw
19 what was going on and could have
20 stopped it much earlier.

21 So one was about live
22 monitoring of cameras and public
23 transport, more trained social
24 services personnel which got

1 discussed I believe already, and
2 education for customers and
3 passengers, what to do and have
4 clear messaging around that on our
5 trains and subways and buses. And
6 so, that's one part of the
7 question.

8 The second part is,
9 we're embarking on a human
10 trafficking campaign of awareness
11 and prevention. The RFP has gone
12 out. I wanted to know what SEPTA
13 was doing around this issue in this
14 year and then to continue going
15 forward. So those are my two main
16 questions.

17 CHIEF LAWSON: Yes. So
18 to go back on some of those, some
19 of the demands that you mentioned
20 we didn't at the time, but have
21 since successfully achieved the
22 ability to have live look-in on all
23 of our trains. So that technology
24 was introduced a couple years ago.

1 And on every shift, as long as
2 trains are running, I have a team,
3 a civilian team of folks that are
4 watching these trains. So we've
5 achieved that. That has actually
6 resulted in a lot of crime
7 reduction for us. The work that
8 they're doing is phenomenal. So
9 we've seen that success.

10 In terms of human
11 trafficking, a couple years ago we
12 spent some time working with the
13 Department of Transportation on the
14 creation of a training block for
15 frontline staff. That was achieved
16 through all frontline employees at
17 the time that we delivered that a
18 couple of years ago. But part of
19 the work that we did on that was
20 developing a training block for new
21 employees. So now, every new
22 employee that comes into SEPTA gets
23 a block. So how to recognize signs
24 of human trafficking, how to report

1 it, things like that. So everybody
2 touches every frontline staff that
3 works at SEPTA.

4 I will tell you
5 specifically for this year for the
6 events of 2026, that we are working
7 on sort of a refreshing awareness
8 campaign. So the police department
9 is putting together sort of
10 training bulletins for our staff.
11 And starting in May, we're going to
12 start rolling out every week a new
13 training bulletin for staff and
14 it's going to be on things like
15 recognizing suspicious behavior,
16 how to recognize it and report
17 those things. Human trafficking is
18 going to be a topic for that. So
19 kind of the goal is as we move up
20 into the bulk of these events,
21 refreshing our employee staff with
22 how to recognize these things and
23 how to report them.

24 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:

1 Well, thank you. I'm glad to hear
2 about that. I wanted to know since
3 you have this live monitoring have
4 you been actually able to intercept
5 and stop, what's the data around
6 having that? And also with the
7 training, since you've had it for a
8 while, how do you follow up to see
9 how effective it's being or not and
10 where's data around that?

11 CHIEF LAWSON: Yeah. I
12 don't know if we have specific data
13 on attributing arrests to it. I
14 have examples. Many times our live
15 monitoring team, our virtual patrol
16 team, is seeing incidents, both
17 serious in nature and nonserious.
18 So they're directing police all day
19 long. Essentially, if I could
20 describe the workflow, right,
21 they'll see an incident that
22 requires police attention, they'll
23 snap a picture and within a minute,
24 that's in the hands of every police

1 officer in the field. And this is
2 going on all day long, where
3 pictures are going out to our team.
4 So I mean, it's been instrumental
5 in some of the positive statistics
6 that we've referenced.

7 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: I
8 so deeply appreciate that. The
9 reason I ask this and ask for data
10 is to tell our public that this is
11 happening and you are doing this
12 proactively and you're making it
13 safer. People don't know that. I
14 mean, it's a good thing in one way
15 that you can catch people doing bad
16 things, but I think you would
17 increase ridership if people knew
18 you were so proactive about this
19 and making sure and then tracking
20 it.

21 Without tracking, I'm
22 just taking your word. I don't
23 disbelieve you, but I think for
24 people to know there should be a

1 dashboard of some sort that SEPTA
2 should have that says this is what
3 security looks like on SEPTA, and
4 we could have dashboards for other
5 items that SEPTA grapples with.
6 But that's a public-facing kind of
7 tool that could help your
8 ridership, so many things it could
9 do. So I think we need to be
10 proactive in telling our
11 communities, our constituents, that
12 the money we are investing in you
13 is bearing fruit and they need to
14 see that. People need to see their
15 tax dollars being used
16 appropriately.

17 So I thank you for the
18 work. I just need to advertise and
19 amplify it and have data to
20 actually back up what you're
21 saying, because I'm a scientist.
22 So I will take your word, but I
23 need trust and verify. So I would
24 appreciate that.

1 Thank you so much,
2 Council President.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

4 JOHNSON: I want to echo those
5 sentiments, again maybe some type
6 of SEPTA safety public campaign
7 and, again one that builds the
8 confidence up of the public in the
9 ridership. But also again, one of
10 the key conversations, and my
11 members can testify, we were
12 meeting with the Senators up in
13 Harrisburg. They were saying,
14 well, it's not safe. We live in the
15 county, it's not safe there. And
16 we're saying, but our numbers tell
17 us otherwise. But the onus is on
18 us to create that narrative that,
19 no, here's the facts, we are making
20 progress and we are safe in these
21 areas.

22 And to be quite frank,
23 we should be even safer, cleaner
24 than Regional Rail, right, in terms

1 of the level of service that we're
2 providing to the intercity
3 ridership, similar to folks that
4 take these trainings to go out into
5 the counties when they're leaving
6 Philadelphia going back to their
7 counties where they live at. And
8 so, that would be our expectation,
9 to see some type of campaign when
10 you come next year and they say,
11 here's how we're telling this SEPTA
12 story.

13 So with that being said,
14 the Chair recognizes Councilmember
15 Dr. Anthony Phillips, then
16 Councilmember Quetcy Lozada,
17 Nicolas O'Rourke, Jim Harrity, then
18 Jamie Gauthier.

19 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

20 Thank you, Council President.

21 I just want to say thank
22 you to Scott for his leadership.
23 You have been truly yourself in
24 this role, and I think it's been

1 really telling. We want to thank
2 you for what you're doing to bring
3 SEPTA to life. I just have a
4 couple questions. So along the
5 lines of what I've been working on
6 here in the city and all of our
7 budget hearings, I'm focused on
8 helping SEPTA become even more
9 responsive when it comes to our
10 neighbors. Responsive government
11 when it comes to SEPTA is important
12 as well.

13 So first question that I
14 have is around the bus operators.
15 They're your primary concern. Our
16 bus operators, all of our train
17 operators, they're our primary
18 concern. What is the standard
19 operating procedure for a bus
20 operator or a train operator if
21 they're experiencing some level of
22 conflict or danger that's
23 happening? Are the police readily
24 available or is it like they may

1 not get there until moments later?

2 What is the rapid response when it
3 comes to something?

4 MR. SAUER: So first and
5 foremost, we train all of our
6 frontline staff in de-escalation.
7 So we are trained. Our operators
8 are all trained to de-escalate a
9 potential conflict, understanding
10 of course that the de-escalation
11 techniques only take you but so
12 far. In the event that there is an
13 incident or let's say before an
14 incident occurs, if the operator
15 feels that they are in jeopardy,
16 they have a two-way radio aboard
17 the bus. They also have a silent
18 alarm aboard the bus that they can
19 trigger a response.

20 That response in the
21 City of Philadelphia is generally
22 under four minutes for a police
23 response for a crime or a violent
24 offense. That's not just take into

1 account where our police are,
2 because the City of Philadelphia
3 will respond to those sorts of
4 events as well and they are usually
5 more readily accessible to the bus
6 depending on where it is, so that
7 happens rather quickly.

8 In many cases when there
9 is a violent offense that occurs on
10 a bus where a passenger strikes an
11 operator or something to that
12 effect, almost every single time
13 our transit police are making an
14 arrest in that case. It may not
15 happen at the scene, but it'll
16 happen shortly thereafter.

17 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:
18 What about just not the violent
19 ones. What about the nuisance
20 person, the person who's just being
21 a nuisance? They're loud, they're
22 causing disturbances among the
23 riders. I mean, are they asked to
24 just de-escalate that? Are they

1 asked to have SEPTA police come out
2 at that moment because they're
3 technically not public safety
4 officers?

5 MR. SAUER: Sure. It
6 varies depending on what's
7 happening. So let's assume it's a
8 nuisance, somebody's, I don't know,
9 playing loud music on the vehicle
10 and the operator is instructed that
11 if it's safe to do so, have that
12 patron kind of turn the music down
13 or whatever, use headphones or
14 whatever the ask is, do it
15 politely, do it professionally.

16 If it's not safe to do
17 so, then they can request help.
18 They can call on the radio to our
19 control center and say, I have a
20 passenger that's causing a
21 disturbance, they're doing this.
22 And then the control center will
23 make the call in concert with the
24 Transit police who sit side-by-side

1 with them. Is this a police issue
2 or is this a supervisor issue,
3 either or both can be summoned and
4 they will be summoned in a moment's
5 notice from the control center once
6 the report is made. But all that
7 decision-making happens in our
8 central control center which is at
9 our headquarters.

10 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

11 Great. And lastly, because I just
12 heard the bell, a lot of our
13 residents in the 9th District are
14 concerned about the fact that it
15 seems like every so often there is
16 a potential strike looming. They
17 would love for leadership to work
18 even better with the union so that
19 we don't have these potential
20 strikes. Is there somewhere in the
21 budget where you're accounting for
22 maybe reserve funds for future
23 salary increases for our union, you
24 know, workers that work at SEPTA,

1 so we can stop or whatever they
2 demand? It'd be nice if you all
3 are more hand-step, you know, lock-
4 and-lock, and they can get not a
5 year contract, but they can get
6 multiple years that they're
7 agreeing upon, so it's not always a
8 threat potentially of us not
9 cooperating.

10 MR. SAUER: So the
11 answer is yes. Every year we go
12 into our budget presuming that it's
13 a contract year where we know we're
14 going to negotiate a contract. We
15 will establish a budget of what we
16 expect to incur in salary increases
17 for the union into that budget, and
18 that's how we approach
19 negotiations.

20 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS: Is
21 that lockstep with the union where
22 the union feels -- when you make
23 those budget decisions?

24 MR. SAUER: Certainly,

1 the union sometimes believes it's
2 not enough and that's part of
3 negotiations. But what I will say
4 though, I'm very pleased to say
5 that we have not had a disruption
6 since 2016 so almost 10 years since
7 the last work stoppage. And that's
8 something that SEPTA couldn't say
9 for a long time. We were seeing
10 work stop just every two, three
11 years.

12 Now, getting to a multi-
13 year contract is my goal as well
14 and I know it's also the TWU's
15 President's goal. He and I meet
16 often and discuss -- we don't just
17 wait for contract cycles to roll
18 around. He and I have regular
19 discussions and ongoing discussions
20 about how we can improve things
21 here at the organization. So I
22 know it's his desire as well as
23 mine to get a multi-year contract
24 done.

1 We need stabilized
2 funding in order to reach that
3 agreement, which is why we were
4 able to do a two-year deal this
5 time because we knew we had two
6 years of stable funding in order to
7 get that done.

8 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

9 No, thank you. Thanks, Council
10 President.

11 I just want to offer
12 that up. I mean, I've been hearing
13 about some of the pensions of some
14 of the retirees are not increasing
15 in this growing, rapidly-changing
16 economic world, and those things
17 should be considered. And if you
18 need to ask us, right, to help you
19 get closer to that, I think a lot
20 of us would be in favor of that. I
21 know I would.

22 And then I just had the
23 quick suggestion of you have a lot
24 of events and programs. One of the

1 things that I think could be
2 helpful is if you had on each one
3 of your buses and train lines an
4 area where there could be flyers
5 that could be posted up and every
6 operator says, hey, take a flyer,
7 there's a meeting coming up, here's
8 a change that's happened to the
9 line. That way we can really
10 account for the fact that the
11 people who normally ride the bus or
12 the train are getting that
13 information. I think that would be
14 really helpful. I mean, I don't
15 think that's a big cost to put
16 something like that, a little thing
17 to stick onto something so people
18 get information about upcoming
19 events.

20 Because we had a meeting
21 at (inaudible) the other day and
22 people are like, we didn't know, we
23 didn't know. I'm like, okay, what
24 is SEPTA doing when it comes to

1 advertisement. I have other
2 questions, but that's all I have
3 for now in terms of my comments and
4 questions. I do want to say that
5 Verbena Avenue, if you could take
6 note, in our district is being
7 talked about a lot of times around
8 cleaning and quality-of-life
9 issues. We constantly get
10 questions about maintenance and
11 cleaning around that area. Is
12 there something you could do on
13 that? I just want to make sure.

14 MR. SAUER: I can't
15 speak specifically to that area.
16 But I mean, cleaning and security
17 is kind of the focus, that's our
18 entire focus at this moment. But
19 what we can do is I can go back and
20 look at that --

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

22 JOHNSON: Can I get a point of
23 information please? What is the
24 size of your cleaning operation?

1 MR. SAUER: So the
2 cleaning operation is in excess of
3 about 700 staff, and that's to
4 clean stations, facilities and
5 vehicles. Each vehicle fleet has
6 its own dedicated cleaning staff --

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

8 JOHNSON: You said 700?

9 MR. SAUER: Yes, that's
10 correct. And that's just the
11 custodial staff. Then there are
12 supervisors and managers and things
13 like that, that oversee that, but
14 700. And that has been a dramatic
15 increase since COVID. When we
16 entered 2020 for example, there
17 were only 180 cleaners dedicated to
18 the subways, the Market-Frankford
19 Line, the Broad Street Line.
20 That's about 350 now. So we've
21 really dramatically increased the
22 cleaning ranks.

23 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

24 Yeah. Maybe they could work with

1 Carlton Williams, Council

2 President?

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

4 JOHNSON: Yeah, I was thinking like

5 Clean and Green along the SEPTA

6 stations, and we're all rowing in

7 the same direction on this issue.

8 I think part of this is a

9 perception of people's experience,

10 right. And I know you're doing

11 work. You say 700 people, right,

12 but how do you measure your impact,

13 right?

14 And I know we have a

15 long Subway and El system, right.

16 But really, I will look at how

17 often those teams are powerwashing

18 the stations as well as the subway

19 cars. And I guess because of some

20 of the quality-of-life issues that

21 we're dealing with, particularly

22 along the Broad Street Line, but

23 definitely that Frankford El Line,

24 right. And we know what the issues

1 are around Kensington and so forth,
2 that we're just stepping up and
3 ramping up those efforts, right.

4 And again, when you talk
5 about PR, I would have some type of
6 Clean and Green SEPTA initiatives.
7 Again, that boosts morale, the
8 ridership, that something is being
9 done. And again, it also arms us
10 when we go to Harrisburg and they
11 say, well, this was going on in
12 Philadelphia and we say, oh no,
13 here's the positive things that are
14 taking place and why we're
15 advocating for additional SEPTA
16 funding. And so, those are just
17 some of the things to think about.
18 And we're here to be partners in
19 this, because we have family
20 members that take SEPTA day-in and
21 day-out.

22 We have friends that
23 take SEPTA day-in and day-out. My
24 wife takes the 17 bus, right.

1 Yeah, she takes the 17 bus. And
2 so, I want for her what I want for
3 myself and the same thing I would
4 want for my constituents and family
5 as well. So we're a partner in
6 this as well.

7 So Chair recognizes
8 Councilmember Quetcy Lozada --

9 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:
10 Thank you, Council President.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

12 JOHNSON: -- then Nicolas O'Rourke,
13 then Jim Harrity and Jamie
14 Gauthier.

15 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:
16 Good morning. Thank you for being
17 with us this morning. I guess I'm
18 a bit frustrated because I hear
19 what you're saying, but the
20 realities of the folks in my
21 district who take SEPTA, who rely
22 on SEPTA, whose only option is
23 SEPTA is painfully different. And
24 so, I've sat here budget season

1 after budget season and we're
2 having the same conversation.

3 And so, I guess my
4 question first -- let me start with
5 a comment first and, that is, in
6 order for you to create the next
7 generation of transit riders, it is
8 not going to take funding. It is
9 going to take a safe experience. I
10 see a sign back there that says we
11 won't get there without SEPTA, but
12 we're not going to get anywhere if
13 we're not safe, right.

14 And so, I'm extremely
15 frustrated around the safety aspect
16 and the cleanliness of our system.
17 My phone is blowing up because I
18 have a direct relationship with the
19 people that I represent in the 7th
20 Councilmanic District, many of
21 whose only option is SEPTA. And
22 for them to tell me that they are
23 using pipes on the train, for them
24 to tell me that they have to move

1 from train cart to train cart three
2 and four times to get from
3 Kensington and Allegheny to 15th
4 and Market is a problem, right.

5 For them to tell me that
6 people are shooting up on the
7 trains, for them to tell me that
8 they have to stand the entire ride
9 because there is a problem on the
10 system that they report on their
11 app and it's not responded to is a
12 problem. We cannot continue to sit
13 here and ask for transit funding if
14 we're not creating a safe
15 experience for everyday riders. We
16 just can't, right. There are
17 people that meet around quality of
18 life in Kensington every day.

19 Chief Nastell(sic), what
20 is your relationship with Deputy
21 Commissioner Rosario?

22 CHIEF LAWSON: We have a
23 good relationship. Our staff meets
24 weekly with the Kensington group.

1 He has my number, I have his. We
2 pick up the phone, talk to each
3 other on issues over the years. We
4 have a good working relationship, I
5 would say.

6 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: I
7 asked him the same question. He
8 said, we really don't have one.
9 And so, there's a lack of
10 communication. When Nastell was
11 here, there were weekly meetings,
12 people were talking every day,
13 people were present. They were a
14 part of the solution. We need to
15 get there. I don't know what needs
16 to change, but you both should be
17 saying we have a daily
18 conversation, we know exactly what
19 is happening around outreach. We
20 have a relationship and are
21 communicating with DBHIDS and CBH
22 and all of those outreach providers
23 on the ground every day to make
24 sure that when people get on our

1 transit system, they are having a
2 safe experience. It has to happen.
3 It has to happen.

4 There is no reason why
5 I'm sending Wendy photos of five,
6 six police officers at SEPTA
7 stations when there are people who
8 are living unsheltered inside of
9 your spaces. No reason for that.
10 There's no reason for that.
11 There's no reason why I should be
12 driving around at any time of the
13 day and there's open fires inside
14 of your stations. No reason for
15 that. Because you guys apparently
16 have cameras, right, so somebody
17 should be monitoring your cameras
18 to see that there's an open fire
19 inside of your structure.

20 We can't talk about
21 increasing fares or cutting routes
22 and still ask people to take our
23 transportation system when we're
24 not doing for people. And I want

1 to be a supporter of SEPTA. I know
2 that it's many in my community's
3 only option, but it is not
4 acceptable. And it is not fair to
5 Wendy to receive text messages on
6 Sunday, on Friday, on Monday, on
7 Wednesday. It is not fair.

8 Because I know if I'm blowing up
9 her phone, there's 17 other members
10 that are blowing up her phone. And
11 I'm not asking for special
12 treatment. I'm asking for fairness
13 in response.

14 We know what's happening
15 in Kensington. We know. And so, I
16 am asking for you all to figure out
17 what the plan of action is going to
18 be as it relates to meeting on a
19 daily basis, if necessary, at the
20 beginning until we stabilize the
21 situation from Tioga all the way
22 down to Berks Station, because it's
23 when apparently things change and
24 give my riders in my community the

1 same attention that you give other
2 neighborhoods. That's what I'm
3 asking for, so that we can get
4 there with SEPTA.

5 MR. SAUER: We will do
6 that.

7 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:
8 Thank you.

9 Thank you, Council
10 President.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
12 JOHNSON: Thank you.

13 Chair recognizes
14 Councilmember Nicolas O'Rourke,
15 then Councilmember Jim Harrity and
16 then Gauthier.

17 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:
18 Good morning, everyone. Thank you
19 for being with the -- afternoon,
20 everyone. Thank you for being with
21 us today. It is very possible that
22 not everyone understands. So I
23 want to highlight the amazing work
24 that y'all are doing with a

1 shoestring budget. We all hear
2 when things go wrong we have no
3 qualms about pointing it out, but I
4 just want to make sure everybody
5 knows on record how much is going
6 right.

7 In 2024, SEPTA was
8 ranked as the most efficient
9 transit agency in the country. It
10 is able to provide each ride at
11 almost half the cost, as I
12 understand it, than Boston or
13 Chicago. In 2024, SEPTA saw a 33%
14 drop in crime. That is the single
15 largest, I think, one-year decline
16 in the history of this particular
17 transit system. SEPTA reported its
18 highest-ever customer satisfaction
19 scores last year.

20 And on top of that, by
21 2031 SEPTA will be rolling out, as
22 you've already spoken to,
23 Mr. Sauer, completely new El cars,
24 trolley cars, a completely new and

1 modern system. It is high time, I
2 believe, that we recognize that we
3 can. And if we work together, we
4 continue to row in the right
5 direction, together in the same
6 direction. We'll have what any
7 world-class city requires, and that
8 is a world-class transit system
9 that is affordable, that is clean,
10 that is consistent, that is safe,
11 that is expansive. And we'll all
12 need to work together more
13 effectively because we all have a
14 stake in this, SEPTA, the city, the
15 state, the private sector even.
16 I've had several conversations
17 about that.

18 It's clear to me,
19 President Sauer, that the SEPTA
20 organization is doing its job on
21 those particular points that we've
22 raised. But my question for you
23 is, what can the city do to make
24 that job easier?

1 MR. SAUER: Well,
2 certainly I appreciate that. I
3 think it's -- I'm hard-pressed to
4 come up with an answer more than
5 what you all have done. I mean,
6 committing the dollars that you are
7 considering to commit to SEPTA is
8 an important step for us. It
9 virtually unlocks \$1 billion from
10 the state and displays the
11 commitment that the City of
12 Philadelphia has towards transit in
13 this region. The advocacy that you
14 all did last year in Harrisburg
15 advocating on our behalf, I mean
16 that really meant something,
17 certainly not just to SEPTA, but to
18 all your constituents.

19 And then of course, the
20 new commitment now to the Zero Fare
21 program, the Key Advantage program.
22 The City of Philadelphia is our
23 largest customer, not just
24 geographically, but the City of

1 Philadelphia's Administration is
2 our largest customer on the Key
3 Advantage program. The commitment
4 to Zero Fare, the school district,
5 all those commitments, that's the
6 information I take to our
7 institutions for Key Advantage and
8 say, look what the city has
9 committed, look what the school
10 district has committed to, we need
11 your commitment now. So that
12 continued advocacy helping us push
13 these institutions, these large
14 businesses towards SEPTA, that
15 would be a big help to us.

16 That is going to be my
17 mission for the next year, to get
18 out and sell Key Advantage to the
19 largest employers of the region to
20 get them bought-in to transit as
21 part of their budgets and part of
22 their commitment to the region.

23 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE: In
24 that same line or at least kind of

1 in that same theme, I introduced,
2 as you know, the Transit Access
3 Fund more than a year ago at this
4 point, some legislation that we
5 introduced last year. The Transit
6 Access Fund would dedicate, just as
7 a reminder .05%, a half of a
8 percentage of the General Fund.
9 That's equal to the Housing Trust
10 Fund, which also takes out .05% of
11 the General Fund, to permanently
12 fund the Zero Fare program and to
13 provide matching grants to small
14 employers to participate in SEPTA's
15 Key Advantage program, bring in
16 transit passes to more employees
17 citywide.

18 We all know how critical
19 the Zero Fare program is. We've
20 talked about it already today. But
21 like Member Brooks lifted up, I
22 kind of want to talk more about the
23 Key Advantage program. On the
24 question and the hope of expanding

1 revenue, how important are
2 low-income ridership programs like
3 Zero Fare and Key Advantage in
4 actually realizing that?

5 MR. SAUER: I mean, it's
6 important for that reason of
7 course. I mean, certainly the
8 ridership, there are low-income
9 residents that are going to try to
10 ride anyway. But there are also
11 low-income residents who see maybe
12 that fare as a barrier to riding.
13 So that low-income fare reduces
14 that barrier, gives those folks an
15 opportunity to ride. That
16 certainly helps us with revenues.
17 That's revenue that we didn't have.

18 But what it also does
19 for us is it now lessens the burden
20 on that low-income rider to find
21 other ways to try to ride, and I'm
22 speaking specifically to fare
23 evasion. We certainly don't want
24 to make anyone's life more

1 difficult. Fare evasion is a
2 problem for us. It costs us
3 millions of dollars every year.
4 But giving that low-income rider
5 the ability to ride, the ability to
6 pay a fare and also reduces our
7 interaction with our police
8 department potentially with that
9 low-income rider, so reduces all
10 sorts of friction and just opens
11 the door to jobs and education and
12 things that maybe that customer
13 wouldn't have access to without
14 that low-income fare.

15 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:
16 Let's say in a dream world the
17 Transit Access Fund passes. How
18 impactful would city-funded
19 matching grants be to leverage
20 private investment in SEPTA? And
21 also, how might more robust private
22 investment, which I know that you
23 talked about leveraging, help our
24 negotiating position in Harrisburg

1 next year?

2 MR. SAUER: I mean,
3 that's part of our goal and part of
4 what Council President probably
5 heard in his feedback from the
6 Senate last year. We want more P3
7 investment in transit. We want
8 that too. Many of the real estate
9 transactions we're doing today is
10 to encourage P3 investment, to get
11 people investing in the properties
12 around transit, so that in turn
13 induces ridership.

14 Advertising and
15 marketing, station naming rights,
16 all those things feed into our
17 non-fare box revenue and allows us
18 to keep costs down, it allows us to
19 generate more revenue on our own,
20 which then in turn reduces the
21 obligation that may or may not be
22 needed by government. So there's
23 lots of things that all this feeds
24 into the wheel and make SEPTA run.

1 But generating our own revenues
2 outside of what goes into the fare
3 box is very important for our
4 survival and our future.

5 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

6 All right. Well, the bell was
7 wearing me out a couple times, so
8 I'll tighten and put a bow on this
9 and just say that I echo honestly,
10 and you know I am a supporter and
11 it is essential for SEPTA to be top
12 tier, right. We deserve that and
13 we're a world-class city so that
14 has to be in place.

15 And also, I echo the
16 sentiments of my colleagues that
17 have frustrations around
18 cleanliness. And I shared this
19 with Ms. Wendy on our call.
20 Perception is the ultimate reality,
21 not necessarily the ultimate truth,
22 but it is the ultimate reality.
23 Even if you haven't rode SEPTA, you
24 probably would be discouraged from

1 riding if you hear the stories of
2 what our experiences have been,
3 what anybody's experience has been
4 as it relates to going into some of
5 these stations and seeing the
6 condition that they're in.

7 I'm encouraged to hear
8 about the uptick from 100 to 700
9 workers that are focused on
10 cleaning. And also, if staffing up
11 doesn't get the job done, then
12 maybe we have to double what
13 maintenance looks like on a regular
14 basis. Whatever the current
15 program is in terms of maintaining
16 cleanliness, we have to look at
17 that, how do we double that to make
18 sure that we're not just hoping to
19 fall into cleanliness, but it is
20 top priority in the same way that
21 we should be prioritizing
22 infrastructure. This is
23 infrastructure upkeep.

24 I don't want us to

1 pretend that we're New York. We
2 are our own city. And also, you
3 mentioned sometimes hearing
4 frustrations about people talking
5 about what they've seen in Asia.
6 I'm concerned because the last
7 couple of years we have seen,
8 whether it's in New York or here,
9 when torrential downpour comes as a
10 result of climate change, what have
11 you, you've got water coming
12 through the walls at the train
13 station. It's really challenging
14 when you see videos of cities and
15 towns, whose names I can't
16 currently pronounce in China, where
17 you got trains going through houses
18 and buildings and stuff like that,
19 and it's clean as a whistle. If
20 the water does come down, you can
21 see the fish. So I think we really
22 need to prioritize, not just kind
23 of as an aside, but as top-tier
24 focus how we actually realize clean

1 stations in the City of
2 Philadelphia because we are a
3 world-class city and we won't stop
4 having huge events. And so, I
5 think it's particularly important.

6 So, yes, I will continue
7 to fight to make sure that you have
8 funding to be able to do that. But
9 if there's some way that we can
10 reorient to make this a number one
11 priority as well, I think that
12 would be in our best interest. And
13 in conclusion, I'll just say I
14 appreciated Member Phillips lifting
15 up what I think is often
16 overlooked, which is the idea
17 around free transit.

18 There's a culture in
19 professional spaces I think that
20 permeates, that normalizes,
21 standardizes short-sightedness and
22 narrow-mindedness and almost
23 de-incentivizes imagination.
24 Everything that we get a chance to

1 experience in this city comes first
2 from someone's vision. And I think
3 if we can imagine possibilities,
4 let's not cut ourselves off at the
5 hip. It would be good if we had
6 the perfect transit system. It
7 would be good if everyone had
8 access to that and be able to get
9 around. We should not I think fall
10 back on that, you know, and think
11 because we have a grasp on the
12 numbers or what have you, that we
13 can't do these incredible, dare I
14 say, utopic things. We should see
15 that as a vision. Aim for it. As
16 they say, shoot for the stars,
17 sometimes you'll land on the moon.

18 Anyways, thank you,
19 Mr. President, for the time.

20 MR. SAUER:

21 Councilmember Jim Harrity. And
22 then we'll wrap up this first round
23 with Councilmember Jamie Gauthier.

24 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

1 Thank you, Council President.

2 Thank you both for your
3 service. Going to get right into
4 it just for the sake of time, and
5 apologize. One of the things of
6 going next to last is that
7 sometimes your questions have
8 already been asked. SEPTA plans on
9 rolling out the Bus Revolution.
10 Redesign and phase is starting this
11 August which eliminates 18 routes.

12 The first phase, what
13 criteria determine what routes were
14 cut and how equitability will be
15 remaining routes? How equitable
16 will remaining routes be to
17 low-income neighbors? SEPTA's FY27
18 budget relies on a second and final
19 year of 394 million PennDOT capital
20 transfer to cover operations. What
21 is SEPTA's plan to fund in FY2028
22 and beyond?

23 And finally, SEPTA's
24 2027 plan relies on borrowing 4.3

1 billion over 12 years to fully fund
2 and replace the Broad Street Line
3 cars. What is the plan of
4 replacement if those cars fail
5 before the replacements are funded?

6 MR. SAUER: Okay. I
7 think I have them all. So let me
8 start with the Bus Network. So
9 part of the criteria as we looked
10 at the Bus Network -- and this
11 process of course started several
12 years ago -- the goal of the Bus
13 Network was to give more
14 opportunity to more people in a
15 shorter amount of time. In other
16 words, can I get you from where you
17 begin your trip to where you want
18 to end your trip as efficiently as
19 we can in the shortest amount of
20 time. So that's how it all
21 started.

22 As part of this, as we
23 kind of went through and identified
24 specifically which routes would be

1 affected, which routes would remove
2 service, which routes would get
3 service, that all goes through an
4 equity analysis. And as part of
5 the annual service plan
6 presentation that's happening
7 today, we are presenting this
8 implementation phase, this Phase 1,
9 that's going to show what's
10 affected and how it's been affected
11 and as part of that, that equity
12 analysis.

13 And I just happen to
14 have a couple numbers I could share
15 with you. What we're happy to say
16 is that today we have eight routes
17 that are considered high frequency,
18 50 minutes or less, seven days a
19 week. That number is going to
20 almost triple. We're going to be
21 at 29, so actually it is going to
22 triple. It's going to almost four
23 times. That's going to be at 29
24 once the full network gets done.

1 But as far as the equity
2 analysis is concerned, we're
3 showing now that this annual
4 service plan that we're presenting
5 today is going to show an increase
6 in 660 revenue hours across the
7 network. That includes an increase
8 in minority routes and a decrease
9 in non-minority routes. So
10 essentially, we're showing through
11 this analysis that the system
12 becomes even more equitable. So
13 that is a pleasant change that
14 we're going to show to our
15 customers.

16 We tend to focus on what
17 the system is not going to have
18 instead of what it will have. We
19 are going to add frequency to
20 routes that are our highest
21 ridership routes. We're going to
22 add connections where connections
23 didn't exist before, and make them
24 when you connect two frequent

1 routes together, it makes the whole
2 trip easier than one infrequent
3 route on a winding route. So all
4 those reasons make the Bus Network
5 meaningful.

6 Now, I also realize that
7 your constituents probably like
8 their bus route and they like that
9 stop outside of my house. So we
10 are trying to meet people where
11 they live and talk to them about
12 what their needs truly are and try
13 to find a good solution. And
14 that's part of the engagement.
15 That's why we're taking this on a
16 phase-by-phase approach, to make
17 sure that we're not doing anything
18 that's too radical that we're doing
19 today and then two years from now,
20 it gets implemented and then we
21 have a whole lot of new people in
22 the room that maybe didn't hear
23 that initial analysis. So that was
24 thing one.

1 So the other part was
2 the Fiscal '28 capital program, I
3 think, Fiscal '28 and beyond. So
4 our capital funding is just like
5 our operating funding. We have a
6 need, a big one. We deferred or
7 descoped project, 44 projects at
8 the start of last fiscal year, the
9 current fiscal year actually. And
10 we had to do that because we had to
11 shave \$2 billion out of our 12-year
12 program. That was for a variety of
13 reasons, hyperinflation, low
14 funding, increased costs in all the
15 projects that we did.

16 So what we need is a
17 comprehensive solution to funding.
18 We need something that addresses
19 both our operating needs and our
20 capital needs. The only way we're
21 going to make a dent in our \$10
22 billion backlog is to start
23 spending and improving the system
24 at a much higher rate than what

1 we're doing today. That's going to
2 take funding.

3 There's a whole slew of
4 ideas out there on how to
5 accomplish that, either from the
6 state or from local sources. We
7 give our needs. We give folks to
8 experts like you who are going to
9 figure out how best to proceed on
10 this. But we are going to have a
11 capital need and it's only going to
12 get worse over the years, and we're
13 going to have to go into more and
14 more debt to support the program,
15 which is the 4.3 billion that we
16 referenced earlier.

17 So we're trying to make
18 inroads. We've moved some projects
19 around in the program to try to
20 meet the needs of our constituents,
21 to try to meet the needs of our
22 riders, from station accessibility
23 to new rail vehicles to new buses.
24 We've got new buses back in the

1 program this year when we thought
2 we might have to defer them for a
3 couple years. These are really
4 tough decisions that we're making
5 on a very limited budget.

6 There's things that we
7 can do to meet Councilmember
8 O'Rourke's vision of shooting for
9 the stars. We want to hit those
10 stars too. But there are funding
11 needs we can certainly do better
12 internally and how we execute. But
13 there are funding needs that we
14 just can't escape. And I think
15 that addresses the 4.3 billion.

16 I think the last
17 question was, how are we going to
18 make the rail cars last. That is
19 certainly a concern. I think we
20 made really good progress in
21 getting the Silverliner IV fleet
22 back, and we have a plan going
23 forward to do more intense
24 overhauls of the IVs to try to get

1 the last 10 years out of them.

2 Our Market-Frankford

3 Line cars are also going through

4 a -- we took the lessons that we

5 learned from the Silverliners and

6 have now applied them to the

7 Market-Frankford Line cars and the

8 Broad Street Line cars to try to

9 learn what are these components

10 that were built 40 years ago that

11 now we have to pay a little more

12 attention to.

13 They weren't in the

14 maintenance and overhaul schedule

15 because the builder called that a

16 life-cycle component, right.

17 That's going to last the life of

18 the car. Well, the life for the

19 car as they knew it is not the life

20 of the car that we need. So now,

21 we're learning from that process

22 that we have to pay attention to

23 some components that maybe weren't

24 in the original maintenance table.

1 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

2 Thank you.

3 Thank you, Council
4 President.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

6 JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

7 And wrapping up this
8 round is Councilmember Jamie
9 Gauthier.

10 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

11 Thank you, Council President.

12 Good afternoon, General
13 Manager Sauer. And thank you to
14 you and Wendy, one of your newest
15 hires, Ciani, who served for many
16 years in the 3rd District Council
17 Office and your entire team for
18 everything that you do to keep
19 Philadelphia moving on a daily
20 basis.

21 I am very grateful to
22 represent a district that is served
23 so well by SEPTA. We are the only
24 council district where a majority

1 of residents do not drive to work.
2 And so, I recognize how SEPTA keeps
3 not just West and Southwest Philly
4 moving, but the entire Southeastern
5 Pennsylvania region. And I wish
6 that more of our leaders,
7 especially in Harrisburg, would
8 recognize that if SEPTA stops, so
9 does Pennsylvania's economy. And
10 from my vantage point, and I know
11 my colleagues will as well,
12 continue to advocate until people
13 really get this point and fund
14 SEPTA appropriately.

15 A few months ago, we
16 were meeting pretty frequently
17 about the emergency extended
18 trolley tunnel closure that started
19 in the fall. And I just have some
20 questions about where things stand
21 currently. So SEPTA is still
22 closing the trolley tunnel for
23 seven hours every night, which
24 significantly harms many of my

1 constituents. We have not had
2 normal trolley operations since
3 November and now it's mid-April,
4 especially as we gear up for this
5 summer when we will welcome
6 millions of visitors.

7 Not having the trolley
8 tunnel fully operational is going
9 to keep tourists out of West and
10 Southwest Philly, denying our small
11 businesses the same economic
12 opportunities as their peers in
13 other parts of the city, and it
14 will be harder for my constituents
15 to get to the events taking place
16 across our city. And so, can you
17 tell me what's the timeline for
18 getting the tunnel open 24/7 again?
19 And related, why have the temporary
20 shelters been removed from 40th and
21 Market, given that they are still
22 needed every night?

23 MR. SAUER: All right.
24 So thank you for that. Yes -- and

1 we certainly appreciate the support
2 that you gave and the help that you
3 gave us during those difficult
4 months when the trolley was closed
5 every day, all day. So I'm pleased
6 to report that we have submitted
7 our plan to reopen the tunnel in
8 the evenings to our state safety
9 oversight. We're awaiting their
10 feedback. I'm optimistic we can
11 have this tunnel open by the end of
12 the month and be able to run
13 24-hour service back in the trolley
14 tunnel.

15 What we've seen over the
16 last several months, and we
17 reopened the trolley tunnel on a
18 limited basis starting in January
19 12th, I believe it was, so we spent
20 that time, those three months,
21 looking at the slider on the
22 trolley, looking at the wire.
23 Every night we were in the tunnel,
24 examining the wire. And what we've

1 been able to find is that the
2 changes we made, the adjustments we
3 made to everything is we're seeing
4 back to normal results.

5 So we didn't see any
6 issues, which is why we started
7 compiling a report a couple weeks
8 ago to submit to our oversight.
9 We're ready to reopen the tunnel.
10 So like I said, by the end of the
11 month I think we should be back to
12 normal.

13 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
14 Thank you so much. Can I get
15 another question in?

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
17 JOHNSON: (Nodded affirmatively).

18 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
19 I also wanted to ask, what lessons
20 SEPTA learned during this
21 unexpected trolley emergency? And
22 how will you improve how you get
23 information out to community
24 members about future closures or

1 service disruptions? I'm hopeful
2 that there's no trolley blitz this
3 summer because of 2026 but even for
4 the closure last year that we
5 didn't expect, it took SEPTA over a
6 month to get real information about
7 the severity of the situation out
8 to community members. And so, we
9 need better systems in place for
10 the future. And I'd like for you to
11 speak to what process changes
12 you're making.

13 MR. SAUER: So that was
14 the number one issue that we had to
15 learn right away. We didn't really
16 know what the severity was at
17 first. And I think the absence of
18 that knowledge really gave us pause
19 to communicate and that was a
20 mistake. Even if we didn't know,
21 it would have been better to tell
22 people we didn't know and when we
23 would know. So that was a number
24 one lesson that we kind of took

1 from it and having those processes
2 in place to communicate all types
3 of incidents as they occur,
4 especially if we know they're going
5 to have that dramatic of service
6 impact. So our communications team
7 has a more robust approach to that
8 need.

9 The trolley blitz, there
10 is no trolley blitz this summer.
11 So we've put all of our
12 construction activity on hiatus for
13 the events of the summer. So we're
14 trying to make as minimal an
15 impact, construction- and
16 maintenance-wise as we can for the
17 summer events and the shelters.
18 I'll get an answer for you on -- I
19 have to find out what happened to
20 the shelters. I know we discussed
21 that when we were talking about the
22 trolley tunnel a couple months ago.

23 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
24 Okay. I thank you for everything

1 that you and your team did to
2 rectify this situation. It did
3 take us a while to sort of get into
4 gear. I am hopeful that we'll meet
5 that end of the month deadline for
6 the trolley tunnel opening. A
7 couple minutes ago, we were talking
8 about having our service rival, the
9 Regional Rail. I have to notice
10 that when you all had a disruption
11 on the Regional Rail, you kind of
12 moved heaven and earth, right.

13 And so, in my district
14 where people don't just take the
15 trolley because it's a nice thing,
16 they take the trolley and the bus
17 lines and the train because it's a
18 necessary thing, I want to see the
19 same level of urgency and
20 prioritization for those riders
21 too, and I look forward to your
22 continued partnership.

23 We were talking about
24 the SEPTA Key Advantage. I know

1 that a few of the institutions in
2 my district, I believe Penn and
3 Drexel are participating. But I
4 would love to sit down with any
5 other University City institution
6 that's not enrolled in the program
7 and see if we can get them to
8 participate.

9 MR. SAUER: That would
10 be great. I appreciate that.

11 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

12 RICHARDSON: Thank you.

13 Thank you, Council
14 President.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

16 JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

17 Members, are you
18 bringing SEPTA back for a brief
19 second round, yes? Anybody else
20 have questions before -- let me do
21 it this way. We can finish this
22 round with additional questions and
23 we'll break at 1:00 and come back
24 at 2:00; is that okay? And then we

1 just won't do a second round.

2 We'll just get it all out now.

3 Okay.

4 Chair recognizes

5 Councilmember Rue Landau and then

6 also Councilmember Jamie Gauthier.

7 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

8 Thank you. Thank you again. I

9 wanted to talk about data. I'm the

10 Chair of the Tech Committee. And

11 the first question is, what

12 settings and oversight is there on

13 SEPTA cameras that use AI tools?

14 Does SEPTA have an AI policy or a

15 governance board or does it

16 participate in the state or city's

17 governance framework?

18 MR. SAUER: So I'll

19 speak to the governance. So there

20 is an AI policy in development. So

21 we have limited AI applications

22 today. They're mostly operations-

23 based. We have some work to do

24 internally to protect our internal

1 data, to protect it from AI. So we
2 have very limited usage in the back
3 office, if you will. But we do
4 have some AI usage on operations
5 that are monitoring, say, Trolley
6 Pole and pantograph applications or
7 interfaces with wire. We did pilot
8 AI technology on weapons detection
9 last year. That project didn't
10 work for us so we're not using that
11 any longer, but we are using -- is
12 it the Briefcam project?

13 CHIEF LAWSON: Yeah.
14 It's essentially a tool that helps
15 us cut through hours and hours of
16 video quicker, right. We input
17 some data on what we're looking for
18 and this system kind of runs
19 through and cuts down the hours of
20 time it takes to get information
21 out.

22 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:
23 What's it called?

24 CHIEF LAWSON: Briefcam.

1 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

2 Briefcam, great. And thank you for
3 all of that. And what's your
4 policy for sharing data recorded by
5 SEPTA cameras? What would you do
6 if you received a request from an
7 organization like DHS or ICE?
8 Would you release the footage?

9 MR. SAUER: As a
10 government agency, we're subject to
11 right-to-know laws just like anyone
12 else. And so, a reasonable request
13 from anyone could trigger release
14 of video. When it comes to law
15 enforcement, we certainly have
16 partnerships with law enforcement
17 to share video, depending on
18 whether or not they identify it
19 quick enough for us to get it.
20 There are certain capabilities
21 within the system that we have to
22 meet. But, yeah, when it comes to
23 law enforcement, we have different
24 memorandums of understanding with

1 law enforcement to be able to share
2 on a need to --

3 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

4 Does the law enforcement agency
5 have to have a subpoena in order
6 for you to share your video?

7 CHIEF LAWSON:

8 Typically, no. I mean, we're
9 really only sharing video as it
10 relates to criminal incidents that
11 happen either on the highway or --
12 it's really the only video request
13 that we received. We have a
14 process. We have standard MOU with
15 the agencies that we share videos
16 with. So we enter into that
17 beforehand and then we have a
18 process to go down. We have to
19 cite the specific reason you're
20 asking, criminal incident or
21 whatever it is. Then we would make
22 a decision based on that.

23 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: I
24 would suggest you talk to the PPD

1 about their policy of when they're
2 sharing any data or information
3 with ICE. And the second thing is,
4 has your staff been trained as to
5 what to do if ICE officers are on
6 your trains, your trolleys, the
7 subways or on the train platforms?

8 MR. SAUER: So if staff
9 identifies law enforcement or
10 engaged in law-enforcement
11 activity, they report it. They
12 report it through our control
13 center. We get it to the police,
14 our police department, who will
15 engage. If law enforcement from
16 any department or just riding the
17 train as a passenger, that
18 generally doesn't pique any
19 interest from staff, unless they
20 see something developing. So
21 that's typical.

22 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:
23 Thank you so much.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

1 JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

2 Chair recognizes

3 Councilmember Jamie Gauthier and

4 Councilmember Dr. Anthony Phillips

5 will wrap us up and we have a hard

6 stop at 1:00.

7 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

8 Thank you, General Manager Sauer.

9 I wanted you to speak on the

10 outlook for trolley modernization

11 in 2027. I think we know that the

12 best way to cut down on frequent

13 service disruptions is to implement

14 modern, accessible trolley networks

15 installed throughout West and

16 Southwest Philadelphia. So can you

17 speak a bit about that?

18 MR. SAUER: Sure. So

19 Trolley Modernization is probably

20 the single largest infrastructure

21 and vehicle program we have. It's

22 in excess of \$6 billion total. It

23 includes modern street cars, which

24 are already in design, includes a

1 new maintenance facility at 51st
2 and Grays. It also includes level-
3 boarding platforms at all of our
4 street stops, accessible stations
5 underground. Our 19th Street
6 Station, for example, will go to
7 construction very soon. So we are
8 making really good inroads to
9 advance this program.

10 We've been told by our
11 streetcar manufacturer that we
12 should see a half car mock-up
13 probably by the end of the year, so
14 we'll be able to share that
15 hopefully with you at that time.
16 But we're still a couple years off
17 from seeing actual street cars on
18 the line. But we're hopeful we can
19 get the first pilot car in 2029 and
20 then start to see production in
21 2031, somewhere in that
22 neighborhood.

23 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

24 Is that a delay? I thought that we

1 were going to see something in '27
2 in our area of the city.

3 MR. SAUER: It is a
4 delay. There have been some design
5 changes we had to make after the
6 fact, so we are working through
7 that with our car builder. But the
8 half car mock-up is an exciting
9 first step where customers and
10 stakeholders can see for the first
11 time what the car is going to look
12 like. We're going through the
13 design process now for our T5 line,
14 which is the former Route 36
15 trolley along Elmwood Avenue, for
16 platforms and stations.

17 The heavy maintenance
18 facility is going through design
19 right now, so we will start to see
20 some work on that probably next
21 year. So you're going to start to
22 see things start to develop. We
23 need to get our infrastructure
24 straight on the T5 to receive the

1 first pilot car. And that's the
2 most important piece, to be able to
3 properly test that car.

4 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

5 And can you just quickly name what
6 are the elements of the delay? Is
7 it funding? Is it something else?

8 MR. SAUER: That's
9 holding -- so certainly funding.
10 The project is not fully funded.
11 The whole program is not fully
12 funded. We kind of refer to it as
13 a program of projects because
14 there's lots of projects going on.
15 The car project, the maintenance
16 facility project, we have to
17 convert all the overhead wire to
18 receive a pantograph now, much like
19 what you see on regional rail.

20 We have to do some work
21 in the tunnel, on all the stations,
22 the accessibility. There's some
23 track work we're going to have to
24 do. So it really is a huge

1 infrastructure project that has to
2 happen. So there are still funding
3 constraints. We are still funding
4 the program, but the streetcars
5 themselves are funded and we have
6 design work done for the projects
7 that we're advancing.

8 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

9 Thank you so much.

10 Thank you, Council
11 President.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

13 JOHNSON: Thank you.

14 And wrapping this up is
15 Councilmember Phillips.

16 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

17 Thank you, Council President.

18 I just have two last
19 questions. I want to raise
20 concerns about a longstanding
21 capital project, particularly our
22 Lawndale Station in the Northeast.
23 The project has been on the capital
24 plan for years. We propose

1 pedestrian safety improvements that
2 are critically important to the
3 surrounding community. Now, we're
4 hearing that the project may be
5 delayed indefinitely. So what is
6 the current status of the Lawndale
7 Station project? And when can we
8 make sure it's fully funded and get
9 back on the capital projects list?

10 MR. SAUER: So the
11 Lawndale project was part of the 44
12 projects that were deferred at the
13 start of Fiscal '26, the current
14 fiscal year. That is essentially
15 deferred until beyond that 12th
16 year of this year's program. So
17 2039 would be the first
18 opportunity, unless there's a
19 funding change. And then we can
20 reintroduce some of those projects
21 back into the program. But at the
22 very earliest, we would not see
23 that project begin until 2039.

24 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

1 Okay. And this is because of the
2 recent cuts and so forth that had
3 to transpire?

4 MR. SAUER: The cuts to
5 the capital program at the start of
6 this year pushed that program out
7 of the 12-year program.

8 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:
9 Understood. And then lastly, for
10 our policing I am concerned from
11 residents about the smoking that
12 takes place. Some of the
13 situations that happened between
14 fights with young people getting on
15 and off the bus and then operators
16 have to deal with that situation.
17 Is there a standard operating
18 procedure that is in place? If
19 not, it should be in place where
20 there are officers that are
21 literally riding around certain bus
22 areas, not only at the drop-off but
23 even escorting the bus in some
24 ways. Because, you know, just

1 having police presence at major bus
2 stops where you notice large crowds
3 between -- you got it in the
4 Northeast, you have Olney,
5 different areas that you could just
6 like, you know what, let's always
7 just have a police presence, not
8 just at the let-out of the school,
9 but also just during the actual
10 ride so we don't have to worry
11 about safety in that regard?

12 CHIEF LAWSON: So there
13 is a group within the police
14 department that focuses on bus
15 routes and surface transportation.
16 They typically get their
17 assignments because of a number of
18 things. So either operators at the
19 depot level are kind of reporting
20 to us recurring problems on a
21 specific route. And so, that will
22 gain our attention and we'll put
23 cops on those routes.

24 Another way that we

1 deploy those resources is through
2 our Transit Watch app. So getting
3 word to your constituents to use
4 that app repeatedly will generate a
5 pattern for us. We'll see a
6 specific route pop up more
7 frequently for, say, smoking or
8 whatever the problem is, and then
9 we'll focus on that with that
10 specific group.

11 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

12 And that's what I was saying with
13 the marketing. If you put it on a
14 bus, if you repeatedly say
15 something's happening, this will
16 increase our presence, because a
17 lot of people don't know that.
18 They don't know that by having an
19 organized group of people doing
20 something, that doesn't, you know,
21 they just say, oh, SEPTA's not
22 going to do anything, they just
23 deal with it, especially with the
24 smoking and other things that

1 happen on the bus. So I just want
2 you to -- don't wait, be proactive.

3 It's like the speed
4 cushion law. I didn't wait for
5 someone to get hit, you know. We
6 worked with the city on that, Mike
7 Carroll and Carlton Williams and so
8 forth, mostly Carlton. But I just
9 wanted to say we got it done before
10 it happened. So I just want to
11 make sure.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

13 JOHNSON: Thank you. Well, we
14 thank you for your time and
15 testimony. You do hear loud and
16 clear that members of Council have
17 an interest in public safety and we
18 support your efforts. So when you
19 grab Lil Man-Man or Lil Tanisha on
20 the side where they smoking weed
21 and they're raising all types of
22 havoc, I don't want nobody inside
23 this body talking about why y'all
24 addressing it that way.

1 I'm for public safety.

2 I'm for when my wife gets on a
3 train and she comes home safely.

4 When my wife gets on the bus, she
5 gets to come home safe. And so, we
6 share that sentiment, but also we
7 can also provide behavioral health
8 services and outreach and
9 wraparound services and support for
10 those who are most in need. But
11 we're your partners though in all
12 seriousness. And whatever we can
13 do to be supportive, I'm sure Wendy
14 will keep us abreast of all things
15 SEPTA as well as she has been doing
16 in terms of how we move forward and
17 be supportive of your efforts. But
18 thank you for your leadership and
19 going.

20 And I've been around for
21 a little bit. I don't think I went
22 to Harrisburg with a General
23 Manager walking through the halls
24 of Harrisburg, working in

1 partnership with the Mayor and
2 members in Council. Well, the
3 first time that members of Council
4 done that, but members of Council
5 to actually advocate together in a
6 unified fashion. I don't remember
7 a General Manager doing that.

8 And so, that's a
9 testament to your leadership of
10 going up there stating the case as
11 to why we need we need permanent
12 funding for mass transportation and
13 specifically SEPTA --

14 (Applause.)

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

16 JOHNSON: Permanent, permanent,
17 permanent. And so, whatever that
18 takes for us to get it done, I'm
19 sure we will continue to work in
20 that direction.

21 Council will be at ease
22 until 2:00 p..m. Thank you.

23 (Lunch recess.)

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

1 JOHNSON: Good afternoon, everyone.

2 (Good afternoon.)

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

4 JOHNSON: I want to welcome
5 everyone to Philadelphia City
6 Council during our budget hearing
7 process of the Committee of the
8 Whole.

9 Ms. Loughead, could you
10 please call the next panel.

11 THE CLERK: Jane Golden,
12 Executive Director of Mural Arts;
13 and Emily Schapira, President and
14 CEO of Philadelphia Energy
15 Authority.

16 (Witnesses approached
17 witness table.)

18 MS. GOLDEN: Good
19 afternoon. I'm Jane Golden, the
20 Executive Director of the Mural
21 Arts Program, and I'm joined by
22 some esteemed colleagues today. If
23 you could say your name.

24 MR. VOIGHT: My name is

1 Michael Voight.

2 MS. GOLDEN: You're with
3 what program?

4 MR. VOIGHT: With Color
5 Me Back.

6 MR. CHANEY: Good
7 afternoon. I'm Andre Chaney, and
8 I'm an artist with Mural Arts.

9 MS. DASHELL: I'm Nadia
10 Dashell, Assistant Artist with
11 Color Me Back.

12 MR. HAWK: How you
13 doing. My name Sadiq Hawk. I'm a
14 Rec Crew member at Mural Arts.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
16 JOHNSON: Well, thank you very much
17 for being here today. Ms. Golden,
18 could you please state your name
19 for the record and please begin
20 your testimony.

21 MS. GOLDEN: Yes. My
22 name is Jane Golden, and I'm the
23 Executive Director of the Mural
24 Arts program, a job I feel very

1 privileged and honored to have. I
2 have remarks, but I wanted to say a
3 few things, just personal things,
4 to City Council before I start, if
5 that's okay with you.

6 So it's hard to believe,
7 but this is my last budget
8 testimony before City Council after
9 so many years. It has been a
10 privilege and an honor to partner
11 with all of you in the service of
12 the city. I just wanted to use a
13 small part of my time upfront to
14 thank you from the bottom of my
15 heart. The partnership we have
16 created is nothing short of
17 extraordinary, and it has served as
18 an inspiration to cities both near
19 and far.

20 Whatever Mural Arts has
21 accomplished in my tenure, it was
22 done in partnership with a really
23 big village. But please know and
24 never forget that an important part

1 of that village is the city, its
2 Mayors, of course, but without a
3 doubt, members of City Council and
4 their beautiful and wonderful and
5 inspiring staff members have helped
6 move our work forward.

7 So on behalf of the
8 Board and this amazing staff, I
9 want to recognize and thank each of
10 you. We honestly could not be who
11 we are and do the depth and breadth
12 of our work without your counsel,
13 your support, your wisdom and your
14 investment. You have truly helped
15 demonstrate the power of art as a
16 public good in these challenging
17 and polarizing times.

18 We need this work more
19 than ever. So I ask you to please
20 stay close to Mural Arts. The
21 village we have built together is
22 strong, and I believe there is a
23 wonderful new chapter to write with
24 your support. And so, now I would

1 like to begin my remarks.

2 So good afternoon,
3 Council President Johnson and
4 members of City Council. As I
5 said, I'm Jane Golden and I'm
6 joined by my esteemed colleagues
7 today. And I'm pleased to provide
8 testimony on the Fiscal Year 2027
9 operating budget.

10 For four decades, Mural
11 Arts has partnered with artists and
12 residents and community
13 organizations across Philadelphia
14 to create public art in the shared
15 spaces of our city. Together, we
16 have created more than 4000 murals
17 across every Council District,
18 every Council District, artwork
19 shaped through collaboration and
20 grounded in local histories,
21 experiences and aspirations.

22 In doing so, we've
23 strengthened neighborhood pride.
24 We've helped establish Philadelphia

1 as the mural capital of the world
2 everybody. Can we have a round of
3 applause?

4 (Applause.)

5 MS. GOLDEN: And we've
6 created a powerful way for
7 residents and visitors alike to
8 encounter the city through the
9 voices and vision of its
10 communities. But the murals are
11 only the most visible part of what
12 we do. What people see on the wall
13 is just the surface of something
14 much deeper. Behind every mural
15 are months and months of listening,
16 of conversation, of trust-building.

17 We begin by asking who
18 lives here, what stories are held
19 here, what should be remembered,
20 what deserves to be seen. And then
21 we work together, artists,
22 neighbors, community groups,
23 businesses, city agencies, City
24 Council, to bring those voices into

1 the public space of the city. Yay.
2 For us, this has always been about
3 making sure that anyone, anyone,
4 anyone in any neighborhood can walk
5 out their front door and see
6 something that reflects them. This
7 is what the citizens of
8 Philadelphia truly deserve. And it
9 reminds them, it reminds people
10 that they belong here.

11 The collaborative
12 process is at the heart of
13 everything we do and how we advance
14 Mayor Parker's vision, but also
15 your vision and priorities for
16 Philadelphia. Public safety,
17 education, economic opportunity,
18 education, cleaner, greener
19 neighborhoods, all of it.

20 So I want to start with
21 public safety. We have long
22 believed that safety begins with
23 providing young adults and young
24 people with opportunities, with

1 dignity, with respect, with a
2 chance to be seen and heard. We
3 want to provide them with
4 opportunities so they can start to
5 believe in themselves and what they
6 can become. Through the Guild, our
7 restorative justice workforce
8 program -- can we have a round of
9 applause for restorative justice?

10 (Applause.)

11 MS. GOLDEN: I get so
12 excited. I know that I know this
13 and I see -- like, I talk about it,
14 but I'm always excited. It's,
15 like, odd. I wake up and just am
16 excited. Mural Arts provides
17 people returning from prison and
18 who've been impacted by the
19 criminal justice system with
20 structured work, coaching and
21 support as they rebuild their lives
22 through the Rec Crew -- the Rec
23 Crew, let's hear it.

24 (Applause.)

1 MS. GOLDEN: That work
2 continues in neighborhood
3 recreation centers, and we want to
4 thank the Recreation Parks & Rec
5 Commissioner Susan Slawson. We're
6 working in public spaces where
7 participants work alongside artists
8 to create places that feel cared
9 for, that feel welcoming and full
10 of possibility. Each year these
11 programs serve at least 70
12 returning citizens and roughly 80%
13 move on to jobs training or
14 education. Yay.

15 With full FY27 support,
16 we can grow this work, deepen
17 employment partnerships and pilot
18 scholarships to help participants
19 broaden their choices and
20 opportunities. Public Safety also
21 depends on whether residents have
22 places where they can participate,
23 contribute and shape community life
24 together.

1 In Tacony, Mural Arts

2 created the Tacony Lab --

3 (Applause.)

4 MS. GOLDEN: -- as a

5 neighborhood cultural space. See,

6 that's the thing with artists.

7 They see things other people don't.

8 Some people might say, oh, that's

9 an empty business. But we're like,

10 no, we see possibility, and that is

11 so exciting. So the Tacony Lab,

12 it's a neighborhood cultural space

13 where artists and hundreds of

14 residents come together through

15 workshops, exhibitions and shared

16 programming that build civic

17 participation, local pride and a

18 stronger sense of belonging and

19 meaning.

20 Mayor Parker's budget

21 proposal this year talked a lot

22 about economic opportunity, and

23 this is very relevant and exciting

24 to us. Every year Mural Arts

1 employs at least 250 artists.

2 Let's have a round of applause for
3 that.

4 (Applause.)

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

6 JOHNSON: Attracting and sustaining
7 Philadelphia's creative workforce
8 and investing in the people whose
9 imagination helped shape this city.
10 And I want to thank our Chief
11 Cultural Officer Val Gay, who is
12 here. And through Color Me Back,
13 the city's first program of its
14 kind, the Same Day Work program
15 launched in 2019, it has become a
16 model for many successful programs
17 throughout Philadelphia.

18 We offer same-day work
19 and pay and we're working with
20 people facing housing instability
21 and behavioral health challenges.
22 It's an amazing, inspiring program.
23 And I invite all of you to come
24 visit us. We're underneath a

1 Clothespin, we have a hub there,
2 and in Kensington at K&A. And in
3 particular, I know that we have a
4 member from CEO that's here, and I
5 want to thank them for their
6 invaluable support.

7 Operating from Suburban
8 Station in Kensington, the program
9 engages roughly 450 residents each
10 year for approximately 3200 shifts
11 and distributes more than \$250,000
12 in wages. That's great. But what
13 makes this work so powerful is that
14 it offers -- and, Councilmember
15 Lozada, you have often cited this,
16 that it offers more than a
17 paycheck.

18 For hundreds of people
19 each year, Color Me Back provides a
20 place of welcome, consistency and
21 human connection. So many people
22 are living in isolation, and it
23 seems like something, oh, so
24 obvious, but it doesn't happen all

1 the time. Each shift brings
2 together dignity, creativity and
3 access to support, meeting people
4 where they are and helping them
5 move forward in really concrete and
6 wonderful ways.

7 We also very much
8 believe in young people. And since
9 we started in 1998, we have been
10 really dedicated to art education,
11 art ed. Each year Mural Arts
12 serves more than 2600 young people
13 through free, free arts education
14 and career-connected learning
15 rooted in public projects. Yay.
16 These are young people whose
17 creativity might otherwise have
18 little room to grow in school or
19 after school, and our work helps
20 open that door.

21 Across the city, we see
22 students develop skills around
23 collaboration, critical thinking
24 and form real relationships with

1 practicing artists and employers.

2 The work gives students a voice and
3 a choice. Inevitably, they begin
4 to see themselves differently, not
5 just as students, but as makers,
6 contributors and future leaders of
7 our city.

8 This year 107 teens are
9 participating in Career Connected
10 Learning and 13 paid youth interns
11 are working alongside artists and
12 project managers on neighborhood
13 projects, getting and gaining
14 experience confidence and a
15 stronger sense of what is possible
16 for their own futures.

17 And moving on to a topic
18 we love, cleaner, greener and more
19 beautiful neighborhoods. This is
20 about the daily experience of
21 living in Philadelphia. What does
22 it feel like to walk down a block
23 that is cared for, to see beauty
24 where there once was neglect, and

1 to know that your neighborhood
2 matters. Each year Mural Arts
3 completes between 80 and 100 public
4 art projects, 80 and 100. And when
5 people call us, they think I am
6 speaking for the entire state, not
7 a city. So yay Philly.

8 (Applause.)

9 MS. GOLDEN: We engage
10 roughly 20,000 residents in
11 improving their neighborhoods, we
12 perform more than 20 mural
13 restorations and we carry out 100
14 graffiti remediations. And now,
15 through the gateways to
16 Philadelphia Highway Beautification
17 initiative, we are helping to
18 reshape some of the city's most
19 visible entrances with our great
20 partners at Clean and Green.

21 In fact, if you go on
22 the highway and you go by the CSX
23 wall, you will not believe it. We
24 are shutting down the train and

1 artists are painting in the middle
2 of the night between 2:00 and 5:00
3 in the morning. And people said it
4 could not be done. Just tell us it
5 can't be done and we will do it.

6 (Applause.)

7 MS. GOLDEN: I want to
8 thank Mayor Parker for her
9 leadership in creating this
10 ambitious effort and for including
11 Mural Arts in this important work.
12 And I want to thank my colleague,
13 Director Williams, who I've known
14 for a long time and believes in
15 art. And 2026 is a landmark year
16 and we are featuring 108 new
17 projects.

18 And here are just some
19 of the exciting examples: We're
20 doing a tribute to Philly music
21 legends. We are honoring the Sunra
22 Orchestra, Quest Love, Jesse
23 Bermudez, Celia Cruz. We're doing
24 a tribute to Black dance,

1 celebrating Sidney King and Joan
2 Myers Brown and others. We are
3 celebrating Philadelphia's
4 extraordinary, extraordinary LGBTQ
5 heroes, including Gloria Casarez.

6 And Councilmember
7 Landau, Councilmember Squilla, I
8 don't know where you are but --
9 there you are. Thank you, thank you
10 for bringing this mural to life and
11 it is so beautiful. The design is
12 just absolutely stunning. And then
13 we are also working with the Tacony
14 Lab and doing Northeast 250, its
15 threads of history. And there will
16 be all these artist-led
17 residencies, events and community
18 flag-making.

19 In FY27, additional
20 investment would allow us to
21 support up to 10 more mural
22 projects requested by community
23 groups, residents and
24 Councilmembers, and it would help

1 us to begin addressing a very large
2 restoration backlog that we have,
3 that we really want to work on
4 because we want our collection to
5 always sing. In fact, in fact,
6 just as a special thing today, we
7 unveiled a design in your
8 district -- oh, and Councilmember
9 Jones, you've both been involved in
10 this. And it is a tribute to the
11 Negro League and the Philadelphia
12 Stars. And we are going to show
13 you that design right now because
14 we think it's good to have an
15 interactive session. So is
16 everybody ready? Here it is. It's
17 at 40th and Parkside.

18 (Applause.)

19 MS. GOLDEN: Everybody,
20 we had a mural there and the mural
21 went away. And what's really nice
22 is that the developer who took the
23 mural away is building a wall in
24 the Memorial Park so the mural is

1 coming back to life. Yay. Whenever
2 murals go away, they should come
3 back to life. Okay. I digress.

4 So anyway, as I -- this
5 is the sad part. As I prepare to
6 step down after four decades of
7 service, I do so with extraordinary
8 gratitude and unwavering confidence
9 in Mural Arts future. The work is
10 upheld by Mural Arts staff. And I
11 just want to say, could people who
12 work at Mural Arts raise their
13 hands?

14 (Applause.)

15 MS. GOLDEN: These are
16 extraordinary people who have such
17 dedication. I feel so lucky to
18 work with them. Amazing artists
19 and community partners and public
20 leaders like you who believe in the
21 power of art to help our city
22 thrive. It has been truly the
23 honor of a lifetime to steward this
24 work in service of making

1 Philadelphia a safer, cleaner,
2 greener city, blanketing
3 neighborhoods all over with art
4 that honors people and stories that
5 make our city strong. I know that
6 shared commitment will carry Mural
7 Arts forward.

8 We are so grateful to
9 all of you, to Mayor Parker and her
10 administration and for the
11 leadership of the Chief Cultural
12 Officer Val Gay and the entire team
13 at Creative Philadelphia. And I
14 want to end with, you know, we had
15 our second mural book. We asked
16 Sonia Sanchez to write a foreword.
17 And instead, what she did was she
18 wrote a haiku and I wanted to read
19 part of it to you.

20 She says, Philadelphia,
21 roots lighting these walls with
22 fireflies, flowers stretched in
23 prayer on a cornerstone wall.
24 Brown-skinned children dancing with

1 butterflies, these children's faces
2 light up the stars. Philadelphia
3 painted with blue hallelujahs.
4 Winter a warrior's face. I hear
5 people singing in an open alley a
6 galaxy of dreams. Common ground is
7 we, forever tasting the earth hands
8 in the green light, always saluting
9 peace. Even in the rain, these
10 murals pause with rainbows. Thank
11 you so much.

12 (Applause.)

13 MS. GOLDEN: And now, my
14 wonderful colleagues here are going
15 to talk briefly about the work and
16 the impact on their lives.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

18 JOHNSON: Yeah, they have to be
19 very brief though because we still
20 have another person as well that
21 would like to also give their
22 testimony, the Philadelphia Energy
23 Authority. So please move forward.

24 MR. VOIGHT: Good

1 afternoon. My name is Mike Voight.
2 I've been with Color Me Back for
3 two years. I was connected to the
4 program because of a friend was
5 working on a project in a lot in
6 Kensington called Stop the Risk,
7 Matt Tomesco, who's a program
8 manager and artist with Color Me
9 Back, was doing a mural project
10 there that included putting up
11 fence decorations and making
12 planners.

13 I started working there
14 for a few months and then I went to
15 rehab. When I got out of rehab in
16 June, I went to live at Riverview
17 Wellness. While I was at
18 Riverview, I saw Matt again because
19 he was doing a mural with his
20 floral designs there. He told me
21 to come to work with him again at
22 Color me Back. And because I'm
23 able to leave during the day at
24 Riverview, I've been working as an

1 assistant artist at Color Me Back
2 since then.

3 Mural Arts also paid me
4 to do a workshop series at
5 Riverview. I created a bracelet
6 class and that helped me focus on
7 teaching and setting up a routine.
8 The other people at Riverview
9 constantly stopped to talk to me
10 about the bracelets in the class.
11 I've always loved art, but I never
12 had training in it until I came to
13 work for Color Me Back. The
14 program has given me the life, the
15 ability to aid in my recovery in a
16 positive way. That helps me stay
17 clean. It gives me something to
18 focus on. The art helps me to
19 meditate and puts me at ease.

20 I also love the working
21 environment. Matt is an awesome
22 and great boss. He's very
23 attentive and always listens to
24 people. If I have a problem, I can

1 go to him and talk to him about it.
2 Because of Color Me Back, I've been
3 able to save up money for when I
4 leave Riverview to have my own
5 place. Thank you.

6 (Applause.)

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

8 JOHNSON: Don't go nowhere.

9 MS. DASHELL: Good
10 afternoon. I'm Nadia Dashell. I
11 came across Color Me Back when I
12 was walking by the studio at
13 Suburban Station. I was working,
14 but it was just a job. It wasn't
15 exciting and not a lot of money. I
16 have always loved doing artwork on
17 my own. And so, I decided to sign
18 up. I've been with the program for
19 two years and I worked my way up to
20 becoming an assistant artist.

21 I've been involved with
22 many projects, including a mural at
23 Esperanza Wellness Center, a mural
24 at Mother of Mercy House, three

1 murals at 5th and Lehigh and a
2 mural with Ukrainian artists that's
3 currently installed on the third
4 floor of City Hall. I'm one of the
5 artists who's been doing community
6 engagement for the Large Heart of
7 Kensington Creates project that
8 we're doing on the SEPTA El Line in
9 Kensington. And I will be an
10 assistant on three murals we're
11 installing in Frankford this
12 summer.

13 I've also been through
14 the muralist training program
15 that's offered by Mural Arts. The
16 biggest change I've seen in myself
17 with Color Me Back is that I've
18 gotten out of my comfort zone.
19 I've worked on projects in all
20 different kinds of conditions and
21 I've built a certain resilience.
22 I've been able to adapt to new
23 environments and new people. I've
24 also been able to share my

1 knowledge and taken knowledge from
2 other people around me.

3 My plan was always to do
4 art on the side and I never thought
5 I could make it my career. Now,
6 I'm an assistant artist actively
7 working on murals throughout the
8 city. The people in the program
9 are also like a family to me now,
10 and I don't think I would have met
11 most of them if I wasn't in this
12 program. Thank you.

13 (Applause.)

14 MR. HAWK: My experience
15 with Mural Arts leads me to think
16 even now this isn't just an
17 audience, it's a community, a
18 community of artists, mentors and
19 people who believe in second
20 chances. Being here today matters
21 because this program didn't just
22 give me a space to create. It gave
23 me a place to grow.

24 The art showed me that

1 this isn't just painting on walls.
2 It's progress, it's storytelling,
3 it's emotion and it's healing. I
4 learned that creativity, no matter
5 what form it takes, can be a path
6 to growth and new beginnings.

7 Mural Arts reminded me that we are
8 more than our mistakes, that real
9 change doesn't come from judgment.
10 It comes from support.

11 Mural Arts also didn't
12 teach me -- I'm sorry, Mural Arts
13 also didn't teach me about just
14 artistic skills. It taught me
15 about accountability, it taught me
16 about reflection and it taught me a
17 lot about my community. I learned
18 that restorative justice isn't just
19 about punishment. It's about
20 rebuilding. It's about rebuilding
21 confidence, rebuilding trust and
22 rebuilding ourselves.

23 I see the importance. I
24 see the value in all my peers here.

1 We support each other and we all
2 learn from each other as well. I
3 just want to give a special shout-
4 out to everybody that's here
5 supporting everyone.

6 (Applause.)

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

8 JOHNSON: Excuse me real quick.
9 Young man, can you just state your
10 name for the record for the
11 stenographer please.

12 MR. HAWK: Sadiq Hawk.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

14 JOHNSON: Thank you, sir. Go
15 ahead, young man.

16 MR. CHANEY: I just
17 wanted to say that my desire and
18 passion to be an artist is what
19 brought me back home, but Mural
20 Arts is what kept me home. And
21 what I mean by that is that ever
22 since I was a kid when my
23 imagination was at its most
24 wildest, I always had aspirations

1 and dreams of being an architect, a
2 graphic designer, illustrator. And
3 unfortunately, growing up I felt
4 that in the school systems, because
5 art was taken out, it wasn't a
6 feasible career choice. And so,
7 what wound up happening is when I
8 had the choice to go to college, I
9 left and I felt like a stranger in
10 Moscow when I was in a different
11 state, because it didn't have what
12 Philadelphia has to offer.

13 And I also feel like if
14 you want to make it anywhere, you
15 got to make it at home first. So I
16 started doing my research on what
17 Philadelphia had to offer and I
18 found Mural Arts. And when I found
19 Mural Arts, I came back home and I
20 began to engage with Mural Arts.
21 And I didn't just get access to
22 projects. I got access to a
23 community ecosystem, a place where
24 I could define and also refine my

1 artistic voice and abilities. And
2 I have to say that since then, I'm
3 doing pretty good. I can't lie.

4 (Applause.)

5 MR. CHANEY: With that
6 said, what I'm also ultimately
7 saying is that if we choose not to
8 invest in Mural Arts, what we're
9 ultimately saying is that the
10 people who put their life and their
11 voice on the line and continue to
12 do their own form of advocacy and
13 depict what's going on in our city
14 and push our city forward by way of
15 art, ultimately it'll be a
16 disaster.

17 My last point -- I'll
18 speed it up -- is that the first
19 thing that you learn in art history
20 is that you know about the painting
21 in the caves of Lascaux, which is
22 some of the earliest depictions of
23 art in art history. I feel like
24 Philadelphia is a new cave of

1 Lascaux, not because we're just the
2 mural capital, but because we're
3 truly telling stories that push
4 everything forward.

5 So I feel like we have
6 to invest and overinvest to
7 calculate for inflation and things
8 like that, to ensure that that
9 young kid that's about to make the
10 decision on whether or not they can
11 stay here and not leave, they'll
12 choose to stay because they know
13 that the city also backs
14 initiatives like Mural Arts, which
15 is extremely important. And it's
16 just the right thing to do. So
17 thank you. That's my testimony.

18 (Applause.)

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

20 JOHNSON: Just state your name for
21 the record.

22 MR. CHANEY: I'm sorry.

23 My name is Andre Chaney.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

1 JOHNSON: Can we give all of our
2 young people that testified, let's
3 give them a big round of applause.

4 (Applause.)

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

6 JOHNSON: It is not easy to come up
7 to that podium and provide
8 testimony in public with all of
9 these strangers sitting here
10 listening to you. And so, it takes
11 a bit of courage to be at that
12 table. So thank you.

13 And to the gentleman in
14 the back who's in recovery who
15 talked about how art is therapy,
16 yes, art is therapy, art is
17 healing. Continue to keep doing a
18 great job. I just want you to know
19 that as well.

20 (Applause.)

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

22 JOHNSON: I'm going to ask Emily
23 Schapira to give her testimony and
24 then we'll allow questions from

1 members of Council to address the
2 Mural Arts program as well as
3 Philadelphia Energy Authority at
4 the same time.

5 MS. GOLDEN: Should I
6 stay up here or --

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

8 JOHNSON: You can stay up there,
9 but Emily Schapira is going to join
10 you on the side.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

12 JOHNSON: Emily, just state your
13 name for the record and please
14 begin.

15 MS. SCHAPIRA: Sure.
16 Good afternoon, Council President
17 Johnson, members of Council. I'm
18 Emily Schapira, President and CEO
19 of the Philadelphia Energy
20 Authority or PEA. I am so proud
21 and honored to be here today in
22 Council chambers with Mural Arts
23 program who has been such an
24 inspiration to us over the years.

1 So glad to share this table today.

2 I'm going to share a
3 shortened version of the testimony
4 I submitted in writing and happy to
5 have any questions today. PEA, as
6 you know is an independent
7 municipal authority advancing
8 projects that deliver on the city's
9 most urgent priorities, lower
10 bills, stronger infrastructure,
11 safer neighborhoods and quality
12 jobs.

13 In Philadelphia, clean
14 energy is not just one thing, it's
15 everything. Since 2016, under the
16 banner of the 10 Year Philadelphia
17 Energy campaign, PEA has driven
18 \$1.3 billion in investment,
19 creating nearly 11,000 jobs,
20 exceeding the ambitious goal we
21 initially set out to reach. We
22 recently conducted a full economic
23 analysis to assess the complete
24 impact of our work over the last

1 decade and the return on the city's
2 investment in PEA.

3 And I'm really excited
4 to share this with you today. This
5 is the first time we're releasing
6 these numbers. First, the benefit
7 in municipal tax dollars. The
8 city's invested \$14.7 million in
9 PEA's annual budget since 2016. In
10 that same period, our work
11 generated over \$25.3 million in
12 city taxes. So I'll repeat that,
13 the \$14.7 million that you've
14 invested in PEA over the last 10
15 years produce \$25.3 million in
16 combined personal income, sales and
17 business taxes to fund city
18 government.

19 (Applause.)

20 MS. SCHAPIRA: Second,
21 for every \$1 of city investment in
22 PEA, we've spurred \$90 of local
23 investment in Clean Energy projects
24 and programs, so a 90x return. The

1 \$1.3 billion driven by PEA has also
2 generated over \$2 billion in total
3 economic output for Philadelphia
4 and \$2.4 billion across
5 Pennsylvania.

6 So what has this
7 investment meant to actual
8 Philadelphians? I'll give you a
9 few examples. So 10 years, 1.3
10 billion of investment and 11,000
11 jobs represent the 427 households
12 served by Built to Last so far, who
13 have had their generational wealth
14 preserved, utility bills slashed
15 and health improved through Whole
16 Home Repairs. It represents the
17 nearly 4400 households, over half
18 of whom are low- and moderate-
19 income, who are generating clean,
20 long-term, affordable electricity
21 on their roofs through Solarized
22 Greater Philadelphia.

23 It represents the nearly
24 130,000 brand new, long-lasting and

1 highly-efficient LED streetlights
2 that save money and make every
3 corner of the city safer at night.
4 It represents the 118
5 Philadelphians that graduated from
6 our Green Retrofit Immersive
7 Training or GRIT program, and the
8 224 individuals we connected to
9 clean energy jobs with employers
10 like PECO, PGW and Solar States
11 through our Good Jobs Challenge
12 grant with Philadelphia Works and
13 others.

14 It represents the 14,503
15 students that attend the 23 public
16 schools that have been retrofitted
17 using the Guaranteed Energy Savings
18 Act to be more comfortable,
19 healthier learning environments,
20 and it represents the nine small-
21 and medium-sized local plumbing
22 companies hired by the Water and
23 Sewer Service Line Protection
24 Program who have grown their

1 businesses to serve critical
2 residential infrastructure for the
3 nearly 90,000 Philadelphia
4 households enrolled in the program
5 citywide. That program has saved
6 consumers \$90 million in repairs,
7 and over 70% of all claims were
8 served by minority-owned firms.

9 We are incredibly proud
10 of these achievements and so many
11 more. PEA's work in '26 and '27
12 supports the priorities of the
13 Parker Administration to make
14 Philadelphia the safest, cleanest,
15 greenest city with access to
16 economic opportunity for all and
17 also meets the priorities of City
18 Council to use the tax dollars of
19 hard-working Philadelphians in the
20 most thoughtful, impactful ways to
21 the benefit of all. We learned
22 that we don't need energy to be at
23 the top of the priority list. We
24 fit easily into the day-to-day and

1 strategic priorities of both
2 branches of government. As we
3 focus on the next decade of work
4 for PEA, we plan to scale up, grow
5 this work to be bigger, better and
6 more.

7 For FY27, PEA is
8 requesting a total budget
9 allocation of \$4 million. Mayor
10 Parker's budget proposes 1.3
11 million for PEA. We've
12 demonstrated our ability to turn
13 investment in PEA into economic
14 benefit for the city and all
15 Philadelphians, and we ask for your
16 support to scale and accelerate our
17 work.

18 I want to just take one
19 second to explain why city funding
20 is so important for us. It's a
21 critical piece of the puzzle. PEA
22 has shown proof of concept through
23 nationally-recognized programs like
24 Built to Last and Solarize, and we

1 use the success of those programs
2 to attract new funding to
3 Philadelphia.

4 We rely on much more
5 than just city funding. Our total
6 FY27 budget from all sources is
7 more than \$14 million, but city
8 funding is what allows us to
9 develop the next iteration of big
10 projects and effective programs and
11 stabilize our staffing
12 infrastructure to scale up programs
13 that work. It helps us scale up in
14 anticipation of additional funding,
15 just as it's doing to leverage
16 funding from the Mayor's H.O.M.E.
17 Initiative and pitch to bigger
18 funders. It helps us speed up our
19 pipeline of city energy and capital
20 projects as well.

21 City funding also helps
22 us provide technical support to
23 elected officials, regulators and
24 others to navigate the complex and

1 systemic energy issues we're
2 facing, especially in an
3 environment where data center
4 growth and geopolitics are causing
5 an unsustainable increase in energy
6 costs for every Philadelphian and
7 for even city government as well.

8 PEA needs the stability
9 to do what it's designed to do as
10 an authority work across
11 departments and capital cycles to
12 improve energy infrastructure and
13 stabilize our costs. We will
14 continue to return every dollar
15 invested and more. If we're funded
16 at the proposed \$1.3 million
17 amount, we will be challenged to
18 maintain our staff, much less to
19 strategically expand our capacity
20 to meet the moment.

21 To conclude, this body
22 has a million hard decisions to
23 make when it comes to the budget,
24 and this should not be one of them.

1 We've done what we said we would do
2 and there is more work to be done.
3 We've taken the investment made in
4 us and grown the pie exponentially.
5 We've been frugal, grown
6 responsibly, established our own
7 program funding and have
8 aggressively sought philanthropic
9 and other dollars to ensure that we
10 can deliver for the people of
11 Philadelphia.

12 Since I joined PEA staff
13 10 years ago, 10 years ago now,
14 we've worked hard to build a
15 reputation of being an effective,
16 strategic organization that
17 delivers. I hope our strong track
18 record of success and the
19 overwhelming support of partners,
20 stakeholders and community members
21 lends credibility to our request,
22 and I hope we can count on your
23 support this year. Thank you so
24 much for the time today.

1 (Applause.)

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

3 JOHNSON: Thank you. Before I turn
4 it over to my members, I just want
5 to say it is truly an honor and
6 also a bittersweet moment because
7 I've had the opportunity to work
8 with Ms. Jane Golden over the last
9 20-plus years in some capacity.

10 I first met Jane Golden
11 when I was part of a program called
12 City Year and they had a Mural Arts
13 team. And I remember you asked
14 some people that wanted to be a
15 part of the Mural Arts team and
16 other people that wanted to be a
17 part of other teams where you saw
18 an immediate impact from the work
19 that you would do.

20 We had the Habitat for
21 Humanity team where you would go
22 and build houses. We had another
23 team where teams were in schools
24 working with children. But when

1 you're doing a mural, that's a
2 process within itself. And I
3 remember talking to the Corps
4 members at that time, I was a
5 project manager, really encouraging
6 them to be a part of Mural Arts
7 team, because murals can transform
8 the lives of individuals, right,
9 especially a lot of people that
10 come from Black and Brown
11 neighborhoods that are looking for
12 hope. You may say, well, what do
13 you mean.

14 There's some murals in
15 parts of the city where you might
16 see an image of an individual that
17 you may not normally see, rather
18 that's a lawyer, rather that's a
19 doctor. In my neighborhood of
20 Point Breeze, I remember we had a
21 mural of an astronaut on the corner
22 of 18th and Reed as a part of a
23 mural that was inside of a
24 neighborhood garden, right, or in

1 Southwest Philadelphia off of 53rd
2 and Greenway, there's a major mural
3 the Tuskegee Airmen, right, which
4 also will inspire young people to
5 dream beyond their local
6 neighborhood, and that's the work
7 that Mural Arts has been doing
8 throughout the City of
9 Philadelphia, but also Jane Golden,
10 with her leadership, her passion
11 and her infectious attitude, right,
12 and energy, which she brings to
13 this position really is going to
14 make it harder for the next person
15 who has to fill her shoes.

16 And so, it's truly an
17 honor and a privilege to have this
18 opportunity to work with you and
19 we're going to keep you around as
20 long as we can. We know you're not
21 going to go too far, but you're an
22 icon and I'd like to say an actual
23 institution to the City of
24 Philadelphia, because you have

1 transformed murals and taken our
2 city to the next level.

3 And beyond murals, you
4 also got involved in social justice
5 by helping individuals who deserve
6 a second chance. And so, I'm going
7 to ask for all my colleagues and
8 everyone, can we stand up and give
9 her a round of applause please?

10 (Applause.)

11 MS. GOLDEN: Thank you.
12 I said I wouldn't cry. Thank you.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

14 JOHNSON: We appreciate you, Jane.
15 We appreciate all your hard work
16 and all your dedication. I didn't
17 even talk about the work you do up
18 at Phoenix Prison. Most people may
19 or may not know, helping prisoners
20 find a sense of hope or when you
21 took them to the Barnes Foundation,
22 where normally the Barnes is for
23 the che-che folks, right. And Jane
24 thought it not robbery to make sure

1 we open it up for individuals who
2 deserve a second chance of trying
3 to get their lives together. And
4 could you imagine somebody that's
5 incarcerated saying, my artwork is
6 in the Barnes, Barnes Museum. And
7 so, that's the type of work that
8 you do in terms of your leadership.

9 And so, I'm going to
10 take this moment to begin having my
11 members acknowledge you and ask
12 questions of the Mural Arts
13 program. I'm starting off with
14 Councilmember Nicolas O'Rourke and
15 Councilmember Jamie Gauthier.

16 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:
17 Thank you, Mr. President, and echo
18 all the sentiments that you shared
19 as it relates to the great impact
20 of Jane Golden and all that has
21 been done. Jumping right into it.
22 I was excited to hear about the
23 \$790,000 that's being allocated to
24 Mural Arts as a part of the Mayor's

1 Gateway Project to beautify the
2 highways, Philadelphia's highways,
3 prior to this summer.

4 At the same time it
5 struck me, upon considering the
6 highways being beautified, that
7 SEPTA could equally use that same
8 kind of facelift along the transit
9 stops and along those tracks,
10 especially considering how many
11 international tourists will be
12 relying on public transit instead
13 of cars. So obviously, that's
14 smart for '26, but we are a world-
15 class city and this will not be the
16 only year, it hasn't been the first
17 and it certainly won't be the last,
18 that we welcome the world into our
19 city gates.

20 So if this body were to
21 allocate a similar amount for
22 beautification of SEPTA's
23 infrastructure, would Mural Arts be
24 prepared to use that funding? And

1 if so, how far could that money go?
2 How many murals could we create?
3 How many of the Color Me Back same-
4 day-work-and-pay opportunities
5 could there possibly be, etc., so
6 on and so forth?

7 MS. GOLDEN: Sure.

8 Thank you. Thank you for that
9 question, Councilmember. So I want
10 to say that Color Me Back really
11 got its start partnering with
12 SEPTA, and the early work was in
13 the concourse right under the
14 Clothespin. And it struck us at
15 the time that that was really
16 important because some of the
17 people that we were working with
18 actually were in the concourse and
19 saw us there and signed up for
20 Color Me Back, and that sort of was
21 transformational.

22 But then it's also, how
23 do you change individuals but also
24 impact the built environment of our

1 city, and one mirrors the other.
2 And so, during COVID we worked and
3 did these columns that are just so
4 beautiful. And right underneath
5 the Clothespin there are a couple
6 new murals. And we're working with
7 SEPTA and other places, but it
8 would be a dream to be able to
9 mobilize the talents and the energy
10 and the passion and dedication of
11 Color Me Back to transform stations
12 along the El. I mean, for us that
13 is a dream scenario.

14 And I just want to turn
15 it over to my colleague Nadia
16 Malik, who runs our extraordinary
17 Porch Light Program. Nadia Malik,
18 would you come --

19 (Applause.)

20 MS. MALIK: Nadia Malik.
21 I'm the Director of the Porch Light
22 Department, which is our
23 partnership with Department of
24 Behavior Health --

1 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

2 As-salamu Alaykum.

3 MS. MALIK: Wa Alaikum

4 Salam. And Color Me Back is

5 under --

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

7 JOHNSON: Could you say your name

8 for the record please?

9 MS. MALIK: I'm Nadia

10 Malik.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

12 JOHNSON: Thank you.

13 MS. MALIK: And thank

14 you for the question. So right now

15 we're actually going through the

16 approval process with SEPTA in

17 Kensington. We are doing a project

18 with Councilwoman Lozada's office

19 doing what we're calling Gussets.

20 If you don't know, gussets are the

21 little triangles that are on the El

22 line. If you look at the El line,

23 the poles, there's a little corner

24 of the poles. We are doing 400 of

1 those with the residents of
2 Kensington. SEPTA is going through
3 its approval process to allow us to
4 install 400 of those pieces made
5 directly by Kensington residents,
6 all up and down between Tioga and
7 Lehigh.

8 So all the little -- not
9 all the little stops, but the stops
10 that don't have the little gussets
11 that don't have any electricity
12 issues, we're going to have them up
13 and down the El. We figured if
14 that goes through the approval
15 process, people are going to ask
16 for those in other parts of the
17 city. So I think those are pretty
18 economically easy to do and it is
19 so community engaged. Because
20 again, people are directly painting
21 those. It's a small piece, so
22 people can directly do those.

23 But as Jane was
24 mentioning too, we have been able

1 to mobilize in the stations
2 throughout the city. So we have
3 obviously worked in Suburban
4 Station. We are asking for
5 permission in Kensington right now
6 for the Allegheny Station and for
7 Tioga, for the walls that are at
8 those stops. So, yeah, it would be
9 amazing.

10 And like Jane mentioned,
11 the folks in Color Me Back, they
12 call the Suburban Station space
13 their home, right. They lived
14 there, they slept there. The other
15 stops, the SEPTA stations are home
16 to people. So if we can be an
17 asset of recruiting those folks to
18 kind of beautify the spaces that
19 they called home and hopefully find
20 new homes for them. Then I think
21 it would be an amazing asset. But
22 also, again engaging directly with
23 communities so they can see their
24 own work along the El, I think

1 would just be an amazing, amazing
2 project.

3 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE: I
4 agree. I agree. Duly noted. Let
5 me shift hard to PEA, if you don't
6 mind. Can you give us an update --
7 and good afternoon to you. Thank
8 you for being here as well. Can
9 you give us an update on how PEA is
10 deploying home funding in the Built
11 to Last program? I'm sure I'm not
12 the only member of this body who is
13 very interested in the continual
14 support of getting more of those
15 homes off the waitlist. Can you
16 speak to that?

17 MS. SCHAPIRA: Sure.
18 Well, thank you so much for that
19 question, Councilmember. Funds
20 just started flowing. So we are
21 just beginning to layer H.O.M.E.
22 funding into our projects that are
23 ongoing. We've committed to a
24 minimum of 267 new homes that will

1 be taken off our waitlist. Our
2 current waitlist is 4767 homes. It
3 continues to grow. There is a
4 never-ending need for funding for
5 this. So we are looking everywhere
6 and reaching out to all sorts of
7 new funders, but we are moving
8 forward with the H.O.M.E. funding.
9 Now we're excited that that's
10 moving. It really highlights the
11 importance of this operating budget
12 that we're asking for.

13 We need to be able to
14 build the staffing and the sort of
15 prework that it takes to deploy
16 those H.O.M.E. funds quickly. We
17 got \$8.25 million thanks to the
18 support of this body in the first
19 year for H.O.M.E. funding. So we
20 have to deploy quickly and make
21 sure that we scale the program up
22 in the ways it needs to. That's
23 going to require full staff members
24 even though H.O.M.E. won't pay for

1 full staff members. So that's part
2 of the reason why fully funding the
3 operating budget request is so
4 critical.

5 Secondly, we expect that
6 we'll be able to do more than those
7 267 homes with it, pending other
8 grants and other federal funding
9 and other types of funding that our
10 partners have. So we'll update you
11 on those numbers as soon as we have
12 them. We've currently completed
13 427 homes. We have 270 more that
14 are in construction right now with
15 other funding that's not H.O.M.E.
16 funding, and then we'll add this
17 additional 267, so we'll be at a
18 little over 900 homes with this
19 H.O.M.E. funding.

20 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

21 One more --

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

23 JOHNSON: Briefly, Member.

24 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

1 Yes, sir. I see that you all are
2 running another cohort of green
3 construction training. Can you
4 tell us how PA is helping to train
5 and connect Philadelphians with
6 good jobs and clean energy? I
7 think it's important to get that on
8 the record, given the climate
9 around an attitude towards green
10 energy these days.

11 MS. SCHAPIRA:

12 Absolutely. A lot has changed at
13 the federal government in the last
14 couple of years. And so, that has
15 impacted the clean energy
16 industries. However, the
17 technology continues to move.
18 There are still some tax credits
19 available. I'm sure you all are
20 hearing in your districts the
21 increasing demand to cite data
22 centers and the needs of PECO and
23 others to make sure that we have
24 actually enough power to power the

1 needs coming up.

2 We're seeing these huge
3 investments at the port and other
4 places and all of that needs power.
5 And so, that really has kept the
6 demand high in Philadelphia. We
7 are perfectly located and a
8 strategic market for almost all of
9 these industries. So we continue
10 to do our own training a little bit
11 through the energy coordinating
12 agency, through our GRIT program.
13 We've graduated almost 120 people
14 from that program.

15 We're also closing up
16 the three-year Good Jobs Challenge
17 Grant with Philly Works, where we
18 placed I think almost 230 people
19 into clean energy jobs. And we
20 continue to fund and partner with
21 dozens of other organizations
22 across the region and in
23 Philadelphia who are doing all
24 different kinds of trading, whether

1 it's the construction work that's
2 needed to do real energy-efficiency
3 work or whether it's things like
4 solar battery installation,
5 manufacturing, electric vehicle
6 charging infrastructure
7 installation, so we've got sort of
8 a full gamut.

9 We're also restarting
10 our CTE program at the school
11 district hopefully this fall, and
12 they're just hiring a teacher right
13 now, so we'll be excited to
14 continue that training. And I'll
15 just say this really quickly. We
16 hear from the industry all the time
17 that there is not enough labor.
18 There's a labor shortage in
19 construction and clean energy. And
20 at the same time, we have an
21 unemployment rate among young Black
22 men in Philadelphia that is two to
23 three times the citywide average
24 almost all the time, regardless of

1 the economy.

2 And so, if we can be
3 connecting the dots here, that
4 saves everyone. That helps the
5 industry with the problem that
6 they're designing. And you've got
7 eager young people that want to do
8 this work. So that's what we've
9 been working to do and we've
10 seen --

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

12 JOHNSON: That was a great ending.

13 MS. SCHAPIRA: Thank
14 you.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

16 JOHNSON: That was a great ending
17 to that question. Awesome.

18 Chair recognizes
19 Councilmember Jamie Gauthier, then
20 Councilmember Mike Driscoll.

21 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

22 Thank you, Council President.

23 Good afternoon to both
24 of you. My questions are for PEA,

1 but I wanted to start by saying,
2 Jane, you are one of the most
3 powerful, impressive advocates I've
4 ever had the opportunity to watch
5 and work alongside, and I just want
6 to thank you for everything that
7 you've done for our communities and
8 our city at-large, and you have
9 made us endlessly proud.

10 In fact, myself,
11 Minority Leader Kendra Brooks and
12 Minority Whip Nicolas O'Rourke, we
13 were just in Seattle for a housing
14 conference. And although there are
15 some things to envy in Seattle,
16 like their investment in their
17 public transit system, murals are
18 not a thing that we were envying.

19 In fact, we saw their
20 murals and we were kind of like our
21 murals are so much better. And so,
22 you make us proud and we have the
23 ability to go other places and talk
24 about and know what a fantastic job

1 Mural Arts does here and what a
2 gift you've been to our
3 neighborhoods and our city. So
4 thank you so very much.

5 MS. GOLDEN: Thank you,
6 Councilmember.

7 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
8 My questions are actually for PEA.
9 Each year during budget season, and
10 today is no exception to that, we
11 hear about PEA's effectiveness,
12 your competence. We hear about how
13 much revenue you bring to the city.
14 We hear about the multiplier effect
15 when we give you money and how much
16 money you're able to multiply it to
17 bring to your programs.

18 We hear about amazing
19 projects like the Philly
20 Streetlight Improvement Project,
21 buying solar farms for the city,
22 Built to Last, job creation, all of
23 it, right. And we know how much
24 funding PEA needs to achieve this

1 goal or these goals rather, but
2 every single year the budget that
3 the Administration presents to us
4 cuts PEA's funding back to a
5 baseline of about \$1.5 million,
6 harming the agency's ability to
7 function effectively or plan long-
8 term.

9 And so, this is actually
10 a question for Sabrina Maynard and
11 Rob Dubow, but I'll just get it on
12 record. I want to know what the
13 logic is behind the
14 Administration's decision each year
15 to try and cut PEA's budget in the
16 budget proposal? And I also want
17 to know how this improves PEA's
18 operations, how it sets the agency
19 up for success and how it adds to
20 the Administration's goals to
21 achieve 30,000 housing units and to
22 be the cleanest, greenest city in
23 the country. So I'll just put that
24 on record and hope that we hear

1 back.

2 And then for you, Emily,
3 I wanted to hear more specifically
4 how does this dance that we do
5 every single year where Council is
6 essentially asked to cut your
7 budget, how does that harm your
8 ability to carry out and grow key
9 programs? I know you've talked
10 about that a little bit, but I
11 wanted you to expound.

12 MS. SCHAPIRA: Thank you
13 so much for that question. It
14 causes a delay essentially. So
15 every year we kind of wait through
16 the first half of the year to
17 conserve as much as we can, kind of
18 take things a little bit slow, see
19 where we end up, see what we can
20 ask for and where the Mayor is
21 going to land.

22 We do participate in the
23 Administration's budget process,
24 but have not -- that hasn't changed

1 anything. We're not part of the
2 five year plan -- or we are part of
3 the five year plan, at 1.3 million.
4 We're not able to be considered for
5 additional funds at any point in
6 that process. So it certainly
7 slows things down.

8 And I'll just give one
9 example. We're working on a
10 project right now with the Water
11 Department and PGW. If you ever
12 drive up 95 and you see the flame
13 that's kind of coming up from the
14 side of the road, that's the Water
15 Department flaring biogas. So it's
16 the byproduct that comes out of the
17 sewage treatment process. That can
18 be used in the plant for energy and
19 sort of offset what they have to
20 take from PGW.

21 PGW could also be using
22 that as a clean source of fuel to
23 continue to make Philadelphia a
24 reliable place for natural gas and

1 we're just wasting it, and that's
2 bad for the environment, bad for
3 everybody, bad for the Water
4 Department. We've been working on
5 this project for years and it's
6 kind of been slow and steady
7 because we haven't had the
8 resources to be able to staff it
9 fully. And these are the kinds of
10 things that happen when we're sort
11 of funded at the minimum amount
12 from the Administration.

13 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

14 Thank you. Thank you for your
15 patience. Thank you for doing hard
16 and good work even in an
17 environment that's not optimal.
18 You are an agency that carries more
19 than your weight, right. You are
20 multiplying benefit throughout the
21 neighborhoods in the City of
22 Philadelphia, and I just hope that
23 this is something that we can stop
24 doing every year.

1 I'm fighting to get you
2 a budget that allows you to do your
3 proven and impactful work. And so,
4 hopefully Council will be able to
5 get you the dollars you need, but I
6 hope next year that we're looking
7 at a different budget proposal.

8 Thank you so much.

9 (Applause.)

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

11 JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

12 Chair recognizes
13 Councilmember Mike Driscoll.

14 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

15 Thank you, Mr. President.

16 Welcome ladies. Council
17 has been -- not everybody in your
18 chairs the last couple weeks has
19 been as warmly welcomed as you two,
20 and much richly deserved. Emily, I
21 just want to point out, just as
22 Councilwoman Gauthier says, we got
23 to figure out you getting in the
24 budget, just like we got to get

1 Tacony Lab in the budget. I mean,
2 the return on investment is there.
3 It's proven.

4 In our negotiations,
5 Council President, I think we need
6 to make that clear to the
7 Administration that, you know, it's
8 well worth the investment, Emily.
9 So thank you for what you do.

10 And, Jane, I'm excited
11 that all the visitors are going to
12 come from around the world are
13 going to see the beautiful work of
14 your team in the next couple of
15 months and I'm sure they're going
16 to be thrilled at the work product
17 that you've produced. And thank
18 you for that and thank you for all
19 you've done.

20 Just want to get back to
21 the Tacony Lab. For me, it's a
22 wonderful thing for that
23 neighborhood and for the children
24 in that neighborhood. But from

1 your perspective, what do you think
2 the impact of the Tacony Lab is?

3 MS. GOLDEN: I think
4 for -- I think we share a lot in
5 common because our budget is --
6 it's proposed at 3.7. And last
7 year, because of Council, it went
8 up to 5.2 and we've been working
9 with that number. And so, if we
10 were to go back to 3.7, we'd lose
11 things. We would lose staff,
12 programs, invaluable programs. And
13 like the Tacony Lab and what I
14 think about the Tacony Lab is just
15 it's this relatively small
16 investment for something that has
17 become a beacon.

18 I mean, honestly if I
19 had a magic wand or if I were a
20 funder, I only wish, we would have
21 Tacony Labs in every Council
22 District of the city, because the
23 places like Tacony are miles, miles
24 from any anchor arts institution.

1 I mean, it's great that we're in a
2 city with world-class museums.
3 That's great, but not everybody
4 goes there. So how do we bring art
5 to people.

6 And so, Tacony Lab is
7 the quintessential multi-tasker,
8 you know, programs for seniors, for
9 kids, free programming. It's a
10 maker space. It's got residency
11 programs. It's like a beacon. And
12 I can't even imagine -- if you were
13 to tell people in Tacony that the
14 Tacony Lab was going away, I think
15 they would find it unfathomable.

16 And so, it is the wisest of
17 investments. Because Emily, like
18 what you're saying, it is not a lot
19 of money for a huge impact.

20 Thousands of people are coming
21 through those doors. And why
22 shouldn't that happen in a city
23 like Philadelphia, the birthplace
24 of democracy.

1 Someone once said that
2 Mural Arts was the visualization of
3 democracy, because people actually
4 have a say over what is in their
5 neighborhood and I applauded them
6 for that statement, and we need to
7 stand on that and believe in it and
8 take it to the bank. And Tacony
9 Lab is a wonderful example of it
10 and I cannot thank you enough for
11 your support.

12 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:
13 We're going to keep fighting for
14 it. Kudos to you, Barb Bower and
15 your entire team. Well done.

16 (Applause.)

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
18 JOHNSON: I visited the Tacony Lab
19 too. So Councilmember Driscoll is
20 doing a great job. I know it's
21 something near and dear to his
22 heart. So great program.

23 Chair recognizes
24 Councilmember Quetcy Lozada, then

1 Councilmember Rue Landau.

2 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

3 Thank you, Council President.

4 Thank you both for the
5 work that you do. I've been
6 fortunate to be able to work very
7 closely with speaking --

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

9 JOHNSON: Can you speak into the
10 microphone a little bit more.

11 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

12 Okay. I'm sorry. I've been
13 fortunate to be able to work with
14 Jane and your arts on transforming
15 different parts of the
16 neighborhood. And one thing I
17 think is clear is that we can't
18 agree on a lot of things sometimes
19 in the neighborhood, right. But
20 when we talk about art, when we
21 talk about beautification, when we
22 talk about partnering with
23 stakeholders like Mural Arts,
24 everyone is always on board and

1 everyone says yes, and that speaks
2 volumes about not just your
3 leadership, Jane, but also about
4 the leadership and the artists that
5 are involved in Mural Arts. And
6 so, thank you so much to all of you
7 for your willingness to work in the
8 7th Council District, particularly
9 through the Heart of Kensington
10 Creates Initiative that is going to
11 bring I think to life an entire
12 corridor that for a really long
13 time has had challenges. I'm
14 really excited to see that come to
15 life.

16 Jane, can you talk a
17 little bit about the Heart of
18 Kensington Creates? What is the
19 work? Who was involved? How was
20 the engagement process working
21 directly with multiple
22 neighborhoods within that
23 Kensington corridor? And what do
24 you believe the impact will be once

1 it's complete?

2 MS. GOLDEN: Well, first
3 I want to start with huge gratitude
4 to you for believing in us and
5 believing in the power of public
6 art. I remember the day you talked
7 to me about it and I almost
8 fainted, because I was so excited
9 and just my gratitude knows no
10 bounds. So I just want to start
11 with that. And it has been just a
12 thrill, and I'm going to tag team
13 with Nadia. Maybe you want to come
14 back up and we can be a little team
15 here.

16 So we're partnering with
17 Impact Services. What a great
18 organization. And we are bringing
19 lots of residents together. And
20 what was so interesting,
21 Councilmember, I remember the first
22 meeting and you were there, you
23 could see that it was a big group
24 of people that don't necessarily

1 agree on things, just what you
2 said, but everyone could agree
3 about public art and how much they
4 wanted it, and that's why this
5 Gusset project along the EL,
6 everybody loved it.

7 We could work with
8 homebound people. We can work in
9 hospitals. We can work with
10 children. We could work in
11 schools. Everybody can design a
12 little part of it. And then
13 there's going to be 12 major murals
14 and we are also able to regrant to
15 small galleries and work with a lot
16 of local artists. So really it's
17 like a platform for true expression
18 to flourish. It's phenomenal. It
19 is a phenomenal project and we're
20 going to have a big arts festival
21 and tours. I'm just get so excited
22 I could leap out of this chair.

23 Nadia, what would you
24 like to add?

1 MS. MALIK: Nadia Malik.

2 So as Jane mentioned, we're doing
3 12 murals. And then with the
4 Esperanza Health Center, we are
5 starting this Thursday, tomorrow.
6 We're doing monthly engagement so
7 that anyone who wants to work with
8 the artists, they can come in and
9 work, but Mat Tomesko, who is the
10 artist on the Gusset Project. Our
11 goal was to have 400 individual
12 little triangles made directly from
13 the community. We're at about 350
14 at this point. So you can tell
15 we've done a lot of engagement
16 throughout the community.

17 As Jane mentioned,
18 Impact is an amazing partner. We
19 just spent -- Matt spent a week at
20 Memphis Street Academy, so it's a
21 bunch of kids there that made their
22 little paintings that are going to
23 go up and down the El. And then
24 the 12 muralists, I believe Ricky

1 is the project manager on this and
2 I think he can give us that
3 information. But I believe at
4 least half of the artists that we
5 picked are from -- more than half
6 are from Philadelphia and have
7 connections to Kensington.

8 So I know two of the
9 artists have studios in Kensington,
10 but the main goal of this project
11 is all of those artists will be
12 listening directly to the community
13 and we purposely picked 12 spaces
14 that are up and down Kensington
15 Avenue. So as you mentioned, the
16 little neighborhoods make up the
17 larger neighborhood. They all have
18 their own say. They all have their
19 own idea of the neighborhood. So
20 each neighborhood, each part of the
21 neighborhood can have a different
22 mural that is their say. So we'll
23 be rolling out that engagement next
24 week. We'll be giving people a

1 calendar of here's how you can meet
2 the artists.

3 And the artists are very
4 clear that this is very community-
5 focused, right. This is not a
6 project where you can't not hear
7 from the community. We obviously
8 want the artists to express
9 themselves. They are amazing,
10 beautiful artists. They have their
11 creativity. But this is we want to
12 hear from the community and then
13 put that out there publicly.

14 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:
15 Thank you. Thank you for that.

16 MS. GOLDEN: And also,
17 we'll have tours moving forward
18 too. Every year there'll be tours
19 going to this part of the city.

20 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:
21 Okay. Thank you. Can you share
22 the Affirmations Avenue Project?
23 What do you believe the impact will
24 be on not just the neighbors that

1 are there, but on folks that are
2 traveling through the neighborhood?
3 What would the Affirmation Avenue
4 Projects say to them?

5 MS. GOLDEN: Well, I
6 think that Affirmation Avenue is so
7 interesting and it's our hope that
8 we can take it to some other parts
9 of the city, that it's really about
10 the history of the community and
11 identity of the community and how
12 the community sees themselves. And
13 it's really just an interesting way
14 of creating public art that it's
15 like a street sign and not on a
16 wall. So it sort of takes people
17 like, oh, look at that.

18 So I'm hoping that
19 people can see their lives
20 reflected back to them in ways that
21 people understand. I think one of
22 the wonderful things that I know
23 I'm biased about public art is I
24 think it gives people the dignity

1 and respect they truly deserve and
2 it lifts up our history. It talks
3 about our memory. It deals with
4 where we're from and that's what
5 Affirmation Avenue does.

6 So I'm hoping that
7 that's just their little anchor
8 points along the way that people
9 walking will say, what does that
10 sign say, what does this say and
11 learn more about the community as
12 they're also looking at the big,
13 bold, beautiful murals. So the two
14 artists that lead Affirmation
15 Avenue, they are public school
16 teachers, are part of the public
17 school. And so, they do a lot of
18 their work based on research as
19 well.

20 So in Kensington every
21 neighborhood that they go to, they
22 look at the lost Black history in
23 that neighborhood. And in
24 Kensington, a lot of that was Afro-

1 Caribbean history as well. So
2 they've done an amazing job of
3 focusing on history that people
4 might not know about the
5 neighborhood either. And so, I
6 think it's great that people see
7 those signs, gives them a little
8 nudge to be like, oh, I didn't know
9 that, maybe I can do some more
10 research. But again, they're
11 talking directly to people in the
12 neighborhood who represent that
13 Afro-Caribbean history as well.

14 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

15 Awesome. Thank you. I'm excited
16 about that. And then one question
17 for EPA. You all referred to a
18 study that was conducted by the
19 University of Pennsylvania where
20 you talk a lot about how
21 streetlighting can improve or
22 reduce crime. Can you share with
23 us how many light structures you've
24 actually been able to change? Do

1 you have that information by
2 Council District? And if there
3 have been any challenges that
4 you've experienced and all of that
5 good stuff?

6 MS. SCHAPIRA: Yeah,
7 thanks for that question. So the
8 Philadelphia Streetlight
9 Improvement Project touched every
10 single streetlight citywide,
11 including all of the alleyway
12 lights as well. We had Future
13 Track clearing debris and trash
14 from 1800 alleyways citywide. We
15 replaced 125,305 fixtures and we're
16 just finishing the punchlist now,
17 so we've got a couple more to go
18 but almost done.

19 The project was
20 delivered on time and on budget.
21 It employed hundreds of people. We
22 had incredible diverse
23 participation on that project. We
24 had 47% MBEs, 22% WBES. We

1 surpassed our projected 58%
2 participation rate. It was about a
3 \$92 million project. It pays for
4 itself in just over 10 years, with
5 \$8 million of savings annually to
6 the city.

7 And we do have the
8 numbers by Council District. In
9 the 7th we replaced 12,317
10 fixtures. I think that's all of
11 them and happy to share those
12 numbers with the rest of Council as
13 well. And I'll just mention --

14 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:
15 I'm sorry. And in the 7th, have
16 all of the pictures been completely
17 changed?

18 MS. SCHAPIRA: 99.5%.
19 We've celebrated. It's done, but
20 there's just a little bit of a
21 punch list. There were a few
22 fixtures or a few poles where PECO
23 needed to come in and do some
24 maintenance first before we could

1 replace it or something like that.
2 We had a set of fixtures as well
3 for Commerce Street and a couple of
4 others where it was a different
5 kind of fixture and the
6 manufacturing plant took longer
7 than we hoped, but it's almost
8 entirely complete.

9 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

10 Awesome. Thank you. Thank you for
11 your work.

12 Thank you, Council
13 President.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

15 JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

16 Councilmembers Rue
17 Landau, Jim Harrity, Nina Ahmad and
18 Mark Squilla.

19 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

20 Thank you, Council President.

21 Thank you both for being
22 here and thanks for bringing your
23 teams. You guys are wonderful for
24 all of the work that you do in

1 Philadelphia. I want to tell you
2 that I too am struck by this power
3 duo here of agencies that seemingly
4 do completely different things, yet
5 there is so much overlap.

6 You both provide
7 incredible job training programs to
8 people who need them to provide
9 employment and stability for
10 households. You transform
11 neighborhoods, both collectively
12 large neighborhood transformation,
13 but also individually in houses.
14 You are absolutely our leaders in
15 the return on investment and you
16 tell us every single year that the
17 more money we allocate to you, the
18 more that comes back in
19 Philadelphia in so many different
20 ways.

21 You are both so positive
22 and will just continue to work if
23 we give you more, that all you keep
24 thinking is that good things can

1 happen in Philadelphia and that you
2 will not hear no for an answer, and
3 your creativity and your ingenuity
4 is just so inspiring. We have
5 spent weeks, and a couple of years
6 for some of us and many more years
7 for the rest of us, of hearing
8 other parts of city departments and
9 agencies not be able to answer
10 questions as clearly, not be able
11 to tell us what happened to the
12 money last year, not be able to
13 tell us why a project wasn't
14 finished.

15 And it is so wonderful
16 to hear what you two bring to the
17 table and your organizations and
18 your teams and so frustrating as
19 well for the larger picture, which
20 is not your problem. It is ours.
21 But I got to tell you the contrast
22 is huge. So I hope that doesn't
23 buy into my time. But I just
24 wanted to say that.

1 Jane, you are amazing.
2 You have transformed our city. You
3 have added color and light and
4 beauty everywhere. We know you're
5 not really going anywhere, but
6 thank you and thank you for
7 bringing this team and building
8 your team. You guys are an
9 incredible force and we just know
10 we just got to give you more and
11 more and more.

12 So at the fear that I'm
13 only going to have one chance, I'm
14 going to go two questions for Mural
15 Arts and two questions for PEA.
16 But my first structural question
17 for Mural Arts has to do with the
18 fact that you said there's 195
19 murals that require restoration or
20 conservation. What is the
21 estimated cost to address this
22 backlog? And what risk do we face
23 financially and culturally if
24 restoration is deferred?

1 MS. GOLDEN: Well, I'd
2 say restorations can go from a
3 couple thousand to much more. I
4 mean, the problem in Philly, it's
5 just what it is, it's old
6 architecture, so you don't know if
7 they're leaks and if there's bad
8 flashing and sometimes stucco pulls
9 off and collections age, they just
10 do. I got my start in Los Angeles.
11 And at the time, LA was the center
12 of the mural universe.

13 And many years later I
14 had moved here, it was early Mural
15 Arts. And I got a call from the LA
16 Times and they said, you know,
17 murals in LA are going away. And I
18 was like, what, that seems
19 confounding to me. And they said,
20 well, the city program, they lost
21 their funding, so the graffiti
22 abatement teams, the murals got
23 graffiti, they just take them away
24 or the murals are fading and they

1 take them away. And these were
2 brilliantly-painted murals. And I
3 just thought to myself, oh, we can
4 never let that happen in
5 Philadelphia.

6 And fast-forward, all
7 these years we are known
8 internationally as the city of
9 murals. People come here from all
10 over the place. I mean, over the
11 last month I can't tell you how
12 many people have stopped me and
13 said, I moved to Philadelphia
14 because of the murals, so we want
15 to maintain them.

16 The money that we're
17 asking for, the 1.9 million that we
18 really need, is because of
19 restoration because it's such a
20 little sliver that we have now. It
21 really just doesn't go that far.
22 And believe me, we stretch it
23 really far. But I feel like we've
24 tried everything to raise private

1 money for restoration and mostly we
2 failed, because people want to give
3 money to new things or to programs
4 and people just take it for
5 granted, oh, the collection is just
6 always going to be great, but the
7 answer is, no, it won't. And we
8 just need to make sure that we're
9 always on a mission to maintain
10 that collection. Because it's not
11 just about beauty. It speaks to
12 our lives.

13 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

14 Thank you. Second Mural Arts
15 question is, after four decades of
16 your leadership at Mural Arts, what
17 steps are being taken to ensure
18 institutional stability, continuity
19 of artists, relationships and long-
20 term sustainability?

21 MS. GOLDEN: Yeah.

22 Thank you for that question. Well,
23 I feel like we have an
24 extraordinary staff. And for the

1 last number of years, I've been
2 thinking a lot about the next
3 generation of leadership. And we
4 have our COO Lisa Murch, our Chief
5 Advancement Officer, Aviva Kapust,
6 and the executive team, and Aviva
7 and Lisa will be carrying on. We
8 have an incredible leadership team,
9 the directors of our departments.
10 You met Nadia, Damon is here,
11 Michelle, Phil Asbury from
12 Community Murals. Here are people
13 that absolutely love the work and
14 are dedicated to our city and I
15 have no doubt that they will be
16 extraordinary stewards of all that
17 Mural Arts does.

18 And I think all you can
19 really do is to make sure that
20 people are in place so that you
21 feel that the service delivery and
22 all we do will be uninterrupted.
23 And I feel very confident that that
24 is the case.

1 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

2 Excellent. Thank you. Two
3 quickies for PEA. I promise not to
4 come back --

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

6 JOHNSON: Be real brief.

7 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: I
8 promise. I'm going to give you one
9 broad one, but I do need to ask
10 something that goes back to my
11 frustration. When you go into --
12 the specific one is when you go
13 into a house and have to assess it
14 for Built to Last, how long does
15 that process take?

16 And I'm going to tell
17 you I'm asking because the
18 libraries have gone through an
19 incredibly long process that has
20 made them assess very few libraries
21 to decide what rehabilitation,
22 restoration it need? And I don't
23 understand why it's taken them so
24 long. And the second question has

1 more to do with energy efficiency.

2 I really want to know how are we
3 progressing in our efforts to
4 source our electric needs from
5 clean energy?

6 What can the city be
7 doing more to keep energy prices
8 affordable for residents, for
9 businesses? I know that you've
10 been working across departments to
11 improve critical infrastructure
12 while reducing energy costs --
13 maybe this is a library question --
14 can you give us an example of the
15 types of projects that are underway
16 at the moment? Are there any
17 projects on the horizon that could
18 benefit the city that PEA can help
19 move forward? Thank you.

20 MS. SCHAPIRA: Okay.
21 Yes, I cannot speak to the
22 library's timeline, but I can tell
23 you that the libraries are hot on
24 my list of projects that we'd like

1 to develop. I think we could
2 bundle lots and lots of libraries
3 together and do one big project.
4 We've done this with the school
5 district, where we bundle groups of
6 buildings together. Instead of
7 just doing one at a time, we scope
8 them all together and then we
9 execute.

10 And the model that the
11 Guaranteed Energy Savings Act
12 allows at the state level is a much
13 faster way to address these than
14 the typical way that we do capital
15 projects, and it provides the
16 discount of really using energy
17 efficiency as sort of a coupon for
18 how much this costs. So it reduces
19 the cost of all the capital work.

20 We are doing an example
21 like that right now with the
22 Quadplex Plus Community Health
23 project. That's the four city
24 office buildings, including

1 Criminal Justice Center plus health
2 centers and homeless services
3 buildings. The health centers and
4 the homeless services buildings get
5 very little capital investment
6 almost ever in the city budget. I
7 think their budget is \$1 million a
8 piece this year, and it's not
9 enough to maintain the buildings in
10 a condition that's appropriate for
11 what the uses are.

12 And so, we were able to
13 bundle those together with the
14 Public Property buildings. And as
15 a whole, that is a desirable
16 project to big energy efficiency
17 company. So we're able to sort of
18 do that capital work. The city's
19 contributing \$4 million of capital
20 towards that. We'd like them to
21 contribute a little bit more, but
22 that's okay. And then the rest is
23 being funded by the energy repairs.
24 So that's an example of how we do

1 exactly what you're suggesting.

2 On what we can do to
3 lower energy costs, I'll just say
4 your PECO bill just a couple of
5 years ago was \$0.14 per kilowatt
6 hour. Today it's \$0.212 a
7 kilowatt hour. PECO has also
8 proposed a new rate case, so that
9 would go up to \$0.236 a kilowatt
10 hour. People are struggling. The
11 city also sees the same impacts of
12 energy prices going way up.

13 So a couple of things.
14 One, we've helped the Office of
15 Sustainability reduce the city
16 usage of energy by 49% over these
17 last I guess it's a little over 10
18 years. Now, there's a lot more
19 work to do there, but that almost
20 meets one of our climate goals,
21 which was 50% energy reduction by
22 2030.

23 We've also sourced 36%
24 of the city's electricity now comes

1 from solar. Part of that is solar
2 from those big projects that you've
3 heard us talk about, in Adams
4 County and now a new one in
5 Clearfield County, but it also
6 comes from solar on people's
7 rooftops right here in
8 Philadelphia, where the city is
9 able to buy those credits for those
10 projects, help subsidize the
11 project, but also meet the city's
12 needs. So we look for those kind
13 of win-win projects.

14 The last thing I'll say
15 is one major thing that this body
16 can do to ensure that energy prices
17 do not get any more out of control
18 than they already are, is to manage
19 the data center growth that is
20 projected to happen. I know this
21 is an issue that is going to come
22 up and it's something that we're
23 talking about in the Lower South,
24 but we're happy to support City

1 Council as you're looking at how to
2 manage that and ensure people's
3 bills are not going to skyrocket.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

5 JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

6 MS. SCHAPIRA: Thank
7 you.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

9 JOHNSON: Chair recognizes
10 Councilmember Harrity, and then
11 wrapping us up will be
12 Councilmember Dr. Nina Ahmad.

13 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

14 Thank you, Council President.

15 My girl, Jane, how are
16 you?

17 MS. GOLDEN: I'm okay.
18 I'm okay.

19 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: You
20 know, I love you so much. Little
21 history lesson though. Mural Arts
22 started as anti-graffiti many,
23 many, many years ago, which was one
24 of our first programs to make a lot

1 of kids not have to go through the
2 justice system. It was one of our
3 first programs in order to do that.
4 And I was around back then, because
5 I'm one of the older people here in
6 the room, as a staffer and I
7 remember seeing you, and I don't
8 know how you have kept the energy
9 you have for this long. And you
10 know I'm a big supporter and I will
11 continue to be a big supporter, not
12 only of Mural Arts, but of you
13 personally. So please, I'm here
14 for you. You know that.

15 But I just have a few
16 questions, quick ones for the sake
17 of time. The Restorative Justice
18 program does incredible work
19 supporting returning citizens. How
20 many participants does the program
21 serve annually? What types of
22 skills and job training does the
23 program provide? And what is the
24 job placement rate?

1 And then last but not
2 least, because this is special to
3 me, last year we fought and
4 received money for Mural Arts
5 specifically to expand the art
6 therapy in prisons and our wellness
7 ecosystem. Can you give us a
8 report on the success of the
9 program and how many participants
10 benefited from the art therapy
11 classes? And how can we expand
12 that program?

13 MS. GOLDEN: Sure.
14 Thank you for those questions. I'm
15 going to ask Damon McWhite -- oh,
16 there you are. I'm going to answer
17 about the prisons, and then Damon
18 will take it from there. So I just
19 want to say I'm very proud, as the
20 Council President noted, we have
21 been at the state prison since 2002
22 which was Graterford, and then when
23 Graterford was closed down, we
24 moved to Phoenix. And many of the

1 people in our class are from
2 Philadelphia and I'm really
3 thrilled to say that some people
4 have gotten out, they've come home,
5 they've worked at Mural Arts and
6 they are leading sort of pretty --
7 they're leading lives I don't think
8 that they would have expected.

9 I'm just so proud to see
10 that somebody won a Pulitzer Prize,
11 somebody's working for the Carnegie
12 Institute, someone's at Haverford.
13 I could go on and on. If you were
14 to talk to them now, they would
15 credit that Mural Arts class as
16 being just a really formidable
17 experience in their life.

18 And then just last year,
19 we started working with the
20 juveniles on County Road and that's
21 our art education program. And I
22 just want to say, recently we had a
23 dedication there and it was
24 extraordinarily inspiring. All the

1 young people said that they
2 couldn't do it in the beginning.
3 They couldn't paint, they didn't
4 want to paint and then they did it
5 and then they couldn't -- at the
6 dedication, they couldn't speak,
7 they wouldn't speak. And they got
8 up there and they were absolutely
9 eloquent.

10 And as I was leaving,
11 these three young men came up to me
12 and they said, we don't want to
13 stop, what's next. And I thought
14 that's exactly what we want to see.
15 And then through Porch Light,
16 they're doing really great work at
17 the Wellness Center. We see the
18 impact firsthand and we want to
19 continue it. And that's why this
20 1.9 million that we're trying to
21 infuse into our budget, part of
22 this is for murals and
23 restorations, but it's also to
24 continue doing programs that really

1 deliver on behalf of our city's
2 often most vulnerable residents.

3 And, Damon, I'll turn it
4 over to you.

5 MR. McWHITE: Sure. I
6 need to say my name for the record
7 again, Damon McWhite. In addition
8 to the programs that Jane
9 mentioned, so in the Restorative
10 Justice Department we truly focus
11 on connecting participants to the
12 areas we feel like we interacted
13 with the most. That would be of
14 course working with the City,
15 community engagement, working with
16 other organizations like ourselves,
17 and then the creative economy as
18 well.

19 So the programming that
20 we're doing in both the Guild and
21 the Rec Crew program is to
22 introduce them to the various
23 skills they'll need for that,
24 right. So our daily programming

1 consists of folks showing up
2 between 10:00 to 2 o'clock each
3 day. We're teaching them time
4 management skills. We're teaching
5 them how to interact with folks,
6 conflict resolution, engaging with
7 superior things along those lines,
8 but also working in the community.

9 So the mural projects
10 that we get a chance to work on,
11 the community members that we get a
12 chance to engage with, we feel like
13 we're preparing folks to be able to
14 go out and work for the city and be
15 a positive representation of the
16 City of Philadelphia as well as the
17 creative economy work that we do,
18 introducing them to opportunities
19 to be showcased at the Barnes, work
20 with Creative Philadelphia and
21 various other cultural
22 organizations. We're showing them
23 that there's a pathway for
24 themselves as well working with

1 creative organizations.

2 And the piece that I
3 think is most reflective of the
4 testimony today is working with
5 community organizations. So the
6 same way they contribute to
7 neighborhoods through Mural Arts,
8 there are tons of other
9 organizations that need quality
10 coordinators and equality folks out
11 there doing community engagement
12 and outreach, and we're allowing
13 our participants to get skills in
14 that as well.

15 MS. GOLDEN: And also, I
16 want to name -- these are some of
17 the employers, Sanitation
18 Department, Amazon, Pennsylvania
19 Hospital, the Mann Center, Printer
20 Fly, Edward T. Steele School, the
21 Tech Company, Department of Parks &
22 Rec, Family Dollar, Aramark, Little
23 People Day Care, call
24 representative and construction and

1 landscaping. We're getting people
2 involved in jobs in that area as
3 well. And we have a very high rate
4 of completion and a high rate of
5 people moving on to jobs and a low,
6 low recidivism rate. I think it's
7 4.8 recidivism rate. I mean,
8 that's 4.8. It's like nothing. Our
9 biggest problem, to be honest with
10 everyone, is nobody wants to leave
11 because what we provide is rigor
12 and love.

13 MR. McWHITE: Yes. And
14 I will add in addition to the
15 employers, we've had a number of
16 our participants be connected to
17 CCP and the I Am More program that
18 they have there. So not only just
19 funneling people into job
20 opportunities, but also thinking
21 about long term in their own
22 educational pursuits as well.

23 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:
24 Listen, I said it last year during

1 the budget and I'll say it again.

2 Mural Arts is the least expensive
3 way that we can make our city look
4 even more presentable for 250 and
5 beyond. As you said, we're known
6 worldwide now as a city of murals,
7 and that's something to be proud
8 of. We're proud of you, Jane.

9 We're proud of all the work you and
10 all of your people do every day,
11 especially in Kensington where I
12 live.

13 I'm for raising your
14 budget. I said before, it's the
15 cheapest -- I wish we had more
16 department heads that did as much
17 with as little money as you did.
18 You're the let's-find-a-way person
19 and that's what we all love about
20 you, so thank you. And you know
21 I'm very supportive. And to the
22 gentleman, I hope if he's still
23 here that's in the program, keep
24 coming back. It works if you work

1 it. There's a lot of us out here,
2 brother. We got your back. All
3 right. Take care.

4 (Applause.)

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

6 JOHNSON: Chair recognizes
7 Councilmember Dr. Nina Ahmad.

8 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:

9 Thank you, Council President.

10 Good afternoon. I'll
11 start with Jane and add my thanks
12 to everybody else's for making
13 Philadelphia a global destination
14 and known worldwide for our murals.
15 This is amazing for us in so many
16 different ways, including making
17 Philadelphia destination not just
18 to visit but actually to live,
19 because we need our population to
20 go up to 2 million in order for us
21 to have the revenue. We need to
22 support such efforts that you've
23 done.

24 I have two quick

1 questions for you, Jane. One is I
2 heard a whole list of projects you
3 have that are underway. Did not
4 hear anything about a mural around
5 human trafficking prevention and
6 awareness, unless it's actually
7 embedded in something you said
8 already?

9 MS. GOLDEN: I'm really
10 glad you asked because it's
11 connected to our request, because
12 we don't have the funding. We
13 thought we would have the funding
14 for it. We have an artist who's
15 amazing and who has been impacted
16 herself by this world and we have a
17 design and we're honing in on a
18 wall, and what we don't have are
19 the funds.

20 And I think that just
21 brings me back to while we are
22 called the Mural Arts program, the
23 sliver of funding. Again, there's
24 the sliver for community murals,

1 for murals and for restoration.
2 It's just not enough. The demand
3 far exceeds our ability to do the
4 work. And how wonderful that we're
5 in a city where there's a giant
6 appetite for public art and art
7 that is about beauty and art that
8 is about critical issues,
9 Councilmember. And we should do
10 that. We would love to talk to you
11 about it. We're on a mission.

12 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:

13 Okay. Second question is, we
14 talked a lot about the impact of
15 your work, and maybe you do this
16 already. Do you have it tabulated
17 in a way -- for example, there was
18 a doctor from HUP or CHOP who did a
19 whole research paper on greening
20 communities and the impact on
21 reducing violence. In order for us
22 not to have this budget battle, it
23 would be really helpful to have
24 data around the impact and with the

1 outcome so that we would actually
2 have numbers. I think I've seen
3 something like that from you, but I
4 just wondered if it's in a way that
5 we can have a short-term and a
6 long-term impact of investment in
7 doing this work?

8 MS. GOLDEN: Well, I'm
9 so glad you asked that question, so
10 I want to just say thank you first.
11 We were -- and my colleague Val Gay
12 knows this because Val was there
13 with us. We heard researchers from
14 Penn present data, really
15 fascinating data on work they've
16 been doing, unbeknownst to us,
17 about the impact of murals on
18 wellness and public safety. And
19 this is a number of years. This
20 isn't just a few months.

21 And what they saw over
22 and over again was a real -- they
23 have data to really back up that
24 murals working in public space this

1 way is transformational. And it is
2 not just a blank wall. It turns
3 into something beautiful. It's how
4 people feel. It's what they carry
5 with them. And then from the Yale
6 study, it's what they term
7 collective efficacy, that
8 communities feel absolutely ready
9 for something else because
10 something came that was beautiful,
11 that was inspiring, that was
12 representative of people's lives at
13 work that is resonant with them,
14 and that means something.

15 And so, I would be happy
16 to sit down with you and share this
17 with you. My colleagues and I
18 would love to talk to you about it.
19 Because I sat there and honestly, I
20 was stunned because when someone
21 says, well, we're going to present
22 our own research, you don't know.
23 I thought, well, this could go
24 either way. And then they were so

1 complimentary of the work and I
2 just find it to be fascinating that
3 it had that impact, especially on
4 public safety. I think that one
5 was really a fascinating one. So I
6 would talk about this forever. I
7 won't take up some more time, but I
8 just want to thank you for that
9 very good question.

10 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:

11 Thank you. And I'm going to switch
12 to you, Emily, here. Thank you
13 again for your important hard work.
14 I had a question about energy needs
15 are going up and we need to have a
16 diversified platform of ways to get
17 our energy. Are you the repository
18 of who would bring this to the
19 forefront for the City of
20 Philadelphia?

21 We talked about solar.
22 I don't know if you're working on
23 geothermal. I'm really interested
24 in these small modular reactors for

1 a clean nuclear energy. I wonder
2 where we are with that because
3 anticipating the needs that are
4 going to happen and talking about
5 the rate going up, we can keep our
6 rate down. We can also reduce our
7 carbon footprint by diversifying
8 our energy platform. So I wanted
9 to know from you where we are on
10 this in the City of Philadelphia?

11 MS. SCHAPIRA: What a
12 great question. We are dipping our
13 toes as a city. We've got some
14 solar now. We've got a little bit
15 of innovation down at the Navy Yard
16 where they've done some battery
17 storage, a little bit of community
18 solar down there. We've done very
19 little geothermal. There's a
20 handful of projects across the
21 city.

22 The cost of geothermal
23 has been the barrier. But I think
24 where we've seen the ability to

1 push costs down is when you do that
2 labor market training, when you
3 attract more businesses that can
4 install it and sell it, you create
5 a little bit of competition and
6 drive down the cost that way. So
7 more volume equals better prices.

8 We're seeing PGW do a
9 study that is hopefully almost done
10 on a rec center plus a school
11 together. There's lots and lots of
12 other opportunities for PGW around
13 geothermal. We're hoping that this
14 project that we're working with
15 them on at the Water Department can
16 sort of help them start to conceive
17 of other ways that they can really
18 add some more diversification to
19 Philadelphia's footprint. So PGW
20 is a great avenue there.

21 We're getting involved
22 in the regulatory process with PECO
23 to try to encourage them a little
24 bit more as well on all sorts of

1 things. They get almost all of
2 their power from nuclear, from
3 brown sources we call them. And
4 then we're also working with a
5 whole host of people about the
6 Bellwether District and the Navy
7 Yard in ways that we can really
8 leverage the unique assets that
9 they have, really diverse for
10 energy. And I think you're
11 completely right, we cannot rely,
12 as we've seen with what's going on
13 globally right now, on a single
14 fuel and you certainly can't rely
15 solely on fossil fuels to make it
16 work. So great question and we're
17 happy to talk about that more.

18 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:
19 Yeah, we'll talk more because I
20 heard we have these small modules
21 around us outside, not in our
22 county, outside, so we might as
23 well take the lessons learned and
24 there needs to be a community

1 engagement, because people have a
2 fear about nuclear energy. And we
3 really need to get community at the
4 onset, rather than later, rolling
5 it out to actually work through
6 what does it mean, what does a
7 diversified platform mean. What
8 are the costs of the geothermal
9 that you mentioned?

10 There's an economy of
11 scale for everything we do, so it's
12 really important we get on top of
13 it so that we are not talking about
14 rates after the fact. We need to
15 get ahead of it and I think we need
16 to be the lead just like we are
17 with our murals. So I thank you
18 both for the work you do because
19 this is foundational work that we
20 need to continue and happy to
21 advocate for both of you and we'll
22 talk offline.

23 Thank you, Council
24 President.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

2 JOHNSON: Thank you. I just had
3 another question regarding
4 workforce for Emily. Just give us
5 a brief update on how many young
6 people PEA has actually put to
7 work. And I know there's an
8 overall significant number. Can
9 you state that for the record?

10 And then also, Jane,
11 there was a question regarding how
12 to quantify the work you are doing
13 short-term and long-term. Could
14 you give us numbers on the impact
15 you have done regarding helping
16 individuals who are impacted,
17 right? Because that's something
18 you can kind of measure in terms of
19 people coming home, people working
20 in your program, the recidivism
21 rate from that aspect as well.

22 MS. GOLDEN: Okay. So,
23 Damon. I have numbers here. I
24 just want to make sure they're

1 up-to-date.

2 MR. McWHITE: You want
3 me to start with the --

4 MS. GOLDEN: Participant
5 numbers.

6 MR. McWHITE: Yeah,
7 absolutely. So for this year we've
8 engaged so far with 32
9 participating who are returning
10 citizens. So in addition to
11 returning citizens in our program,
12 we also work with individuals who
13 have been indirectly impacted. So
14 they may have had parents or loved
15 ones that have been previously or
16 currently incarcerated. This is
17 just the number of those who have
18 been returning citizens, but
19 there's a number of more who were
20 indirectly impacted. And then for
21 the participants that we place, we
22 have 80% placement rate amongst
23 those participants who are in the
24 program. And as Jane mentioned

1 earlier, the recidivism rate is
2 around 4.8%. And mostly when we
3 have that happen within the
4 program, it's usually a parole
5 violation, drugs or some type of
6 altercation that requires that
7 returning citizen to go back.

8 MS. GOLDEN: I want to
9 say for Phoenix it's about 25, 30
10 people in our class. But I'm
11 really happy to announce that we're
12 opening it up to the other side.
13 So actually, there'll be more
14 people in the program, Council
15 President, who have shorter
16 sentences who will come out and
17 then they'll be able to work with
18 us, so that pipeline will just stay
19 robust.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
21 JOHNSON: It's good to hear those
22 numbers because we talk about
23 impact, right. It translates to
24 the impact that your organization

1 is having in regards to making sure
2 we're addressing recidivism, people
3 going back to prison for lack of
4 opportunity, people going back to
5 prison for not being able to
6 adjust. So I think that is
7 critically important.

8 Chair recognizes
9 Councilmember Mark Squilla.

10 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA:

11 Thank you, Mr. President.

12 Thank you all for being
13 here and having your testimony.

14 And, Jane, thank you and
15 congratulations on all the great
16 work you did. Mural Arts will
17 always be Jane Golden and we really
18 appreciate stuff that you have
19 done. But last year, we spoke
20 about the uptick in graffiti and
21 what was going on throughout the
22 city. And you had mentioned coming
23 from anti-graffiti when you started
24 with Tommy Conway years ago.

1 You had mentioned how we
2 worked with some of those
3 individuals to get them to
4 participate in some of our murals.
5 And you had mentioned an individual
6 that was one of the big graffiti
7 writers last year and you said you
8 were trying to engage him to be a
9 part of the program. Have you been
10 able to get that person to help
11 out?

12 MS. GOLDEN: I'm so glad
13 that you asked. Actually, that was
14 somebody who I called him on his
15 cell phone, and he was rather
16 surprised to be hearing from me,
17 and he is somebody who's really,
18 really talented. And Phil Asbury,
19 who's going to speak in a minute,
20 the Director of Community Murals,
21 and we cooked up a plan and offered
22 him an opportunity. And he went to
23 5th and Cambria and he worked on
24 this mural and he did a great job.

1 And then he emailed me
2 and he said that he wanted to come
3 see us, and he said that his dream
4 would be to do murals on day care
5 centers, because day care centers
6 are like -- really they're beacons
7 in communities. And so fast-
8 forward, Phil Asbury.

9 MR. ASBURY: Good
10 afternoon. My name is Phil Asbury,
11 Director of Community Murals. We
12 are poised and excited to continue
13 this legacy of offering barrier-
14 free educational opportunities for
15 graffiti artists that are self-
16 identified. I think this person --

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

18 JOHNSON: Like Cornbread?

19 MR. ASBURY: Like
20 Cornbread.

21 (Applause.)

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

23 JOHNSON: He's a legend. How many
24 people know he's a legend? I got

1 the book. I have his book in my
2 office. Very legendary individual.
3 So an honor to have you in our
4 presence, sir.

5 (Applause.)

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

7 JOHNSON: Go ahead, sir.

8 MR. ASBURY: Similar to
9 Cornbread, for this artist graffiti
10 was a gateway, a way to get exposed
11 to the various forms of art, to
12 vocabulary, to define the skills
13 that they had learned through
14 matriculating through graffiti.
15 And I think he identified an
16 opportunity in his neighborhood to
17 adorn a day care center, to learn
18 community process, to allow us to
19 work with him, to be coached and
20 mentored by a professional artist.
21 The same artist who's actually
22 working on the CSX mural has taken
23 time to mentor him and take him to
24 coffee shops and work on the iPad

1 and teach him Procreate and how to
2 design as well as incorporate the
3 interests of his community members
4 to have him be seen using his art
5 skills in a more socially
6 acceptable way by his peers and
7 neighbors.

8 So that mural will be
9 going up. It will be celebrating
10 the power, the magic of motherhood.
11 He's expecting a child next month.
12 He also sadly lost his mom early
13 and wanted to celebrate and lift up
14 this idea that we can all be
15 nurturers and mothers of our own
16 communities.

17 MS. GOLDEN: It's really
18 beautiful. And may I add
19 something?

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

21 JOHNSON: Sure.

22 MS. GOLDEN: Just to
23 say, you know, the one thing that I
24 learned in working in anti-graffiti

1 was truly a gift. It was like
2 getting three graduate degrees, but
3 it was like the amount of talent in
4 this city is phenomenal. It does
5 not equal to the amount of
6 opportunities that young people
7 have. So it's our responsibility
8 to try to find young people like
9 that and create a pathway for them.
10 So that's why we're so proud of our
11 art education program because we're
12 on a mission to do just that.

13 I also want to say we
14 did make a mistake and I would like
15 to clarify the record. We actually
16 see 70 participants a year, not 42
17 in our Restorative Justice program.
18 That is the Rec Crew and the Guild.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

20 JOHNSON: What's the procedure for
21 individuals who want to
22 participate?

23 MS. GOLDEN: What's the
24 procedure?

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

2 JOHNSON: Is it court-appointed?

3 Is it probation officer? Is it --

4 MS. GOLDEN: It's all of

5 that. It's the DA's Office. It's

6 coming out of county jail. It's

7 coming out of the state sometimes,

8 and that's how people come to us.

9 So sometimes it is court-appointed

10 and sometimes people hear about us

11 who are on probation or they've

12 been incarcerated and they're

13 coming home. So it's a mix. But

14 it's all justice-impacted young

15 people, and it's ranging in age

16 between 18 and 26.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

18 JOHNSON: 18 and 26?

19 MS. GOLDEN: Yes. In

20 addition to that, we also work in

21 the Juvenile Justice Service

22 Center. And like I said, we're

23 working on State Road now.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

1 JOHNSON: I just want to address
2 one last thing with the
3 Philadelphia Energy Authority. It
4 was a conversation regarding the
5 back and forth regarding the
6 Administration's budget and your
7 budget proposal. But just clarify
8 for the record the difference
9 between, what is it, Built to Last
10 and Basic Systems Repair? Because
11 some folks think because they
12 overlap, why are you investing in
13 Built to Last when you already have
14 Basic Systems Repair, and they both
15 go toward the rehabilitation of
16 homes. And I think you probably
17 can clear up if there's any
18 misconceptions regarding overlap
19 and basically supporting both
20 initiatives.

21 MS. SCHAPIRA:
22 Absolutely. Thank you so much for
23 asking that question. These
24 programs are designed to overlap.

1 So Basic Systems Repair often comes
2 into a home that has multiple major
3 systems issues. It's a
4 homelessness prevention program.
5 And so, it's meant to just do kind
6 of the minimum thing that is
7 required to keep people in that
8 home.

9 So if you have to have a
10 football-sized hole in your roof to
11 get a roof replacement, that's
12 still extremely helpful. Basic
13 Systems Repair does incredible work
14 across the city. And when they
15 leave the hole, you might have had
16 10 years of rain in your house now
17 because of that hole in the roof,
18 you likely have mold, you likely
19 have ceiling collapses. You likely
20 have all sorts of other issues that
21 have destabilized your foundation
22 that Basic Systems Repair is not
23 able to address.

24 And so, we designed the

1 program specifically to be able to
2 pick up where they leave off and to
3 collaborate with them on homes
4 where there are multiple systems
5 and they don't have enough budget
6 to cover those. So we actually
7 found an interesting statistic
8 recently. When Basic Systems
9 Repair treats a home by themselves,
10 without collaboration they're
11 spending on average about \$11,000
12 per home.

13 When they partner with
14 Built to Last, they're spending
15 \$18,000 on average per home. So we
16 make them more efficient, more
17 effective and able to better spend
18 their dollars and we complete the
19 preservation of that home. So we
20 go above and beyond what is
21 happening. We'll do that mold
22 remediation. We'll fix the
23 ceilings. We'll fix the health
24 conditions and the structural

1 conditions in there. We see all
2 kinds of issues, from simple to
3 complex and we add the energy
4 efficiency.

5 And in most cases where
6 we're doing heat pumps instead of
7 old systems, we're adding solar to
8 that as well for long-term
9 affordability. So these are
10 programs that work extremely well
11 together and should both have the
12 funding that's needed to do those
13 components of the work.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

15 JOHNSON: And when you say solar,
16 right -- and I know at one point in
17 time, similar to how AI is right
18 now, when we talked about solar,
19 especially under Obama, it was
20 like, yo, we have solar jobs, we're
21 going to cut down on using oil and
22 gas because we're going to have
23 solar.

24 Now, I was just in the

1 Poconos and I saw a whole -- anyone
2 ever been to Kalahari Resort?
3 Well, anyway behind Kalahari Resort
4 in the Poconos it's like nothing
5 but 10, 15 rows of solar, right.
6 What does that look like in the
7 City of Philadelphia?

8 And I remember Darrell
9 Clarke created your agency. What
10 does that look like? And I also
11 visited OIC who has a partnership
12 with PECO helping young people put
13 up solar panels. But I don't know
14 when I go down the streets of Point
15 Breeze, just being frank with you,
16 how many of my neighbors have solar
17 panels on the top of their roofs?
18 So how does that work and your
19 success in that area?

20 MS. SCHAPIRA: I love
21 this question the most. Okay.
22 4400 homes in Philadelphia have put
23 solar on their roofs through our
24 Solarize program. Of those, more

1 than half, I think it's 70% are
2 low- and moderate-income
3 households. We've been subsidizing
4 low-income households to go solar
5 for the last eight years. And what
6 we're finding is that people are
7 using solar for long-term
8 affordability. Instead of paying
9 PECO, you're just paying yourself.
10 You're investing in your own home.

11 In some cases, we're
12 able to give \$0 solar leases to
13 people who are part of Built to
14 Last. As utility rates go up and
15 they are going to keep going up, we
16 need to make sure that people can
17 stay in their homes. And one of
18 the biggest reasons people abandon
19 their homes in Philadelphia is
20 utility shutoffs. So this is a key
21 component of affordability,
22 especially for lower-income and
23 middle-income homes. So we are
24 seeing a big shift.

1 We actually did a study
2 a few years ago with the folks
3 waiting in the Social Security line
4 in North Philly and said, are you
5 interested in solar and is this
6 something you've heard of and know
7 about? At first they said, no,
8 we're not interested, we don't know
9 what that is, we don't care. But
10 the thing that changed was when we
11 did training and we saw then
12 people's neighbors and nephews and
13 cousins being the people who
14 install the solar on people's
15 homes. And that changed
16 everything. We went back to that
17 same line and asked again a couple
18 years later and the sentiment was
19 completely changed.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

21 JOHNSON: I know we have to wrap
22 up, but I have just one last brief
23 question. If you could just
24 summarize real quick because we are

1 at 4 o'clock. The number of
2 workshops you're doing in terms of
3 weatherization of individual homes
4 during the wintertime, right, just
5 to make sure you're not losing a
6 whole bunch of energy and your
7 bill's going up, you're paying a
8 higher gas bill. At the same time
9 if you weatherize your home, on
10 average you would save about how
11 much?

12 MS. SCHAPIRA: So we
13 don't run the weatherization
14 program. Now, that's back to PHDC.
15 They're serving a couple --
16 hopefully this year they'll serve
17 about 1000 homes, maybe a little
18 bit more. And the idea of
19 weatherization is that it's a
20 slice, so it maxes out at about
21 \$7,500, \$7,600 I think and is meant
22 to be a piece. So that is one of
23 the components of Built to Last. We
24 include them in everything.

1 And I'll just give a
2 quick example. In Kensington, we
3 recently did 60 homes with private
4 funding from Fannie Mae and from
5 the Green Family Foundation. And
6 in those homes, that \$600,000 that
7 we got there leveraged another
8 \$450,000 in those same homes of
9 other programs, including
10 weatherization. So we leverage
11 every other program that exists.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

13 JOHNSON: Good. Thank you for the
14 job with the lights in the
15 neighborhood. I've been hearing
16 people talk about them.

17 Well, listen, thank the
18 two of you for your testimony.
19 Thank you for being here -- Chair
20 recognizes Councilmember Mark
21 Squilla. Sorry, Mark.

22 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA:

23 Thank you. I know you had some
24 questions. I just wanted to finish

1 my one question. And thank you to
2 asking the one about Basic System
3 Repairs, and that's important to
4 understand because we get that all
5 the time too, how do those programs
6 relate to each other, and that was
7 going to be my question that you
8 asked.

9 So my last question was,
10 you talked about community murals
11 and what that means. But there are
12 always people asking for murals.
13 And how many projects are asked?
14 How many are you able to do? And
15 how long does it take really to get
16 funding in place by the time
17 somebody asks for a mural until it
18 gets completed?

19 MS. GOLDEN: We do about
20 80 to 120 murals a year and that
21 really depends on the funding, but
22 we work pretty quickly. Once we
23 have the funding, we can get up and
24 going. A mural can take a month or

1 it could take six months to a year
2 if you have to find a site. You
3 can have some complexity around the
4 design process, but we're pretty
5 speedy once the funding is in
6 place. And again, if we were able
7 to secure this 1.9 million, there's
8 four buckets that are part of that.

9 One is community murals.
10 One is restorations, restorative
11 justice, and Tacony Lab. And
12 community murals, I think that's so
13 important because it's really --
14 one thing that we've prided
15 ourselves on for years, and I think
16 all of you here know this, is that
17 we're highly responsive. You can
18 call and we can go out and we will
19 do it. And we will work with the
20 community with integrity. We will
21 have a great process of selecting
22 the artists and the murals sit
23 there as beacons for years to come.

24 And just like I said

1 before, the demand absolutely
2 exceeds our ability to do it. And
3 when people ask me this, and they
4 ask me this all the time, what
5 prevents you from doing more work.
6 It is funding.

7 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA:

8 Well, that's why we need to support
9 more funding. Thank you so much.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

11 JOHNSON: Thank you. And so, some
12 of the members who weren't here all
13 day, just for the record, this is
14 Jane's last budget, Member Jones.
15 This is Jane's last budget,
16 Majority Richardson. We'll give
17 you some more flowers.

18 (Applause.)

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

20 JOHNSON: We thank the both of you
21 for your testimony today.

22 Any other questions from
23 members of the committee hearing?

24 (No response.)

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

2 JOHNSON: Hearing none, the Chair
3 recognizes Majority Leader
4 Katherine Gilmore Richardson for a
5 motion that the public hearing and
6 meeting of the bills and
7 resolutions before the committee
8 today stand in recess until Monday,
9 April 20, 2026 at 10:00 a.m. in
10 Room 400.

11 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

12 RICHARDSON: So moved,
13 Mr. Chairman.

14 (Duly seconded.)

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

16 JOHNSON: It has been moved and
17 properly seconded that the public
18 hearing and meeting on the bills
19 and resolutions before the
20 committee today stand in recess
21 until Monday, April 20, 2026 at
22 10:00 a.m. in Room 400.

23 All those in favor
24 signify by saying.

1 (Aye.)

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

3 JOHNSON: Anyone opposed?

4 (No response.)

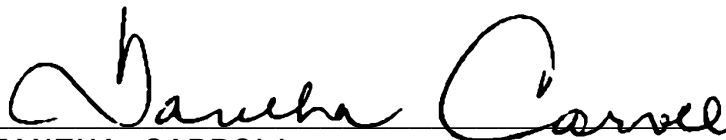
5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

6 JOHNSON: The ayes have it, the
7 motion carries and the committee
8 will stand in recess until Monday,
9 April 20, 2026 at 10:00 a.m. Thank
10 you all very much.

11 (Committee of the Whole
12 concluded at 3:35 p.m.)
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C E R T I F I C A T I O N

I, hereby certify that the proceedings
and evidence noted are contained fully and
accurately in the stenographic notes taken
by me in the foregoing matter, and that this
is a correct transcript of the same.


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\$		
\$0 347:12	\$50 98:13	118 251:4
\$0.14 310:5	\$6 203:22	12 56:19 64:11 181:1 289:13 290:3,24 291:13
\$0.212 310:6	\$600,000 350:6	12,317 297:9
\$0.236 310:9	\$7,500 349:21	12-year 185:11 209:7
\$1 50:2 128:23 129:12,17 130:11 131:11 134:4 169:9 249:21 309:7	\$7,600 349:21	120 272:13 351:20
\$1.3 248:18 250:1 255:16	\$790,000 261:23	125,305 296:15
\$1.5 277:5	\$8 297:5	12th 192:19 208:15
\$10 56:13 116:7 185:21	\$8.25 269:17	13 54:14 76:24 228:10
\$11,000 344:11	\$90 249:22 252:6	130,000 250:24
\$134 49:21	\$900 50:5	14,503 251:14
\$14 254:7	\$92 297:3	15 64:11 94:4,6 346:5
\$14.7 249:8,13	0	150% 114:16
\$18,000 344:15	05% 171:7,10	15th 162:3
\$192 56:8	1	16% 81:9
\$2 185:11 250:2	1 182:8	17 71:21 159:24 160:1 165:9
\$2.4 250:4	1.3 250:9 253:10 279:3	170% 113:13
\$213 56:7	1.5 116:6	18 86:13 180:11 341:16,18
\$230 31:20	1.9 303:17 316:20	180 101:3 157:17
\$236 129:9,11	10 54:9 76:13,14 95:18 96:7 101:10 153:6 188:1 231:21 248:16 249:14 250:9 256:13 297:4 310:17 343:16 346:5	1800 296:14
\$25 113:2	10% 54:7 99:10,14	18th 258:22
\$25.3 249:11,15	100 134:5 176:8 229:3,4, 13	195 301:18
\$250,000 226:11	100% 105:3	1998 227:9
\$3 98:21	1000 98:18 349:17	19th 204:5
\$3,000 98:21	107 228:8	1:00 197:23 203:6
\$30 55:23	108 230:16	1st 34:1
\$35 13:13	10:00 318:2	2
\$4 253:9 309:19	11,000 248:19 250:10	2 318:2 322:20
\$4.3 56:18	1100 74:15	20 229:12
\$402,500 129:8		20,000 229:10
\$450,000 350:8		20-plus 257:9
		200 65:17 74:14 100:21

101:3	24 67:10 86:13	30% 53:24
200,000 65:24	24-hour 75:2 192:13	30,000 277:21
2000 24:9	24/7 191:18	32 333:8
2002 314:21	25 67:11 334:9	3200 226:10
2004 24:9	25% 98:24	33 127:21
2013 105:4	25,000 113:16	33% 53:17 167:13
2016 13:23 14:4 16:6	250 20:2 106:18 225:1	34 65:1
18:21 24:6 26:22 27:3,10	231:14 321:4	350 157:20 290:13
31:17 153:6 248:15 249:9	26 208:13 252:11 262:14	36 205:14
2019 225:15	341:16,18	36% 310:23
2020 105:10 157:16	2600 227:12	37% 54:11
2021 137:22	260253 36:13 38:1,12	394 180:19
2022 63:11	43:14,20 44:10 45:3	3rd 189:16
2024 53:18 116:2 167:7,13	260254 36:13 38:1,13	
2025 53:1,21	43:14,20 44:10 45:3	
2026 48:1 56:8 90:9	260255 36:14 38:2,13	4
108:24 141:6 194:3	43:15,20 44:10 45:4	
230:15	260256 36:14 38:2,13	4 90:24 349:1
2027 45:18,21 49:10 51:18	43:15,20 44:11 45:4	4.3 180:24 186:15 187:15
55:15 56:9 58:12 180:24	260295 12:22 37:24 38:12	4.8 320:7,8
203:11 219:8	41:19,23 42:13 43:5	4.8% 334:2
2028 12:24 13:14 27:11	267 268:24 270:7,17	40 188:10
2029 204:19	27 45:13 205:1 252:11	40% 76:21
2030 310:22	270 270:13	400 265:24 266:4 290:11
2031 167:21 204:21	28 185:2,3	400,000 107:16,17
2032 45:21	28% 18:18	4000 219:16
2039 208:17,23	29 71:21 182:21,23	40th 191:20 232:17
21st 95:24	29th 33:24	42 340:16
22 123:3	2:00 197:24 214:22 230:2	427 250:11 270:13
22% 296:24	2nd 109:24	44 185:7 208:11
223 101:6		4400 250:17 346:22
224 251:8	3	45% 98:6
23 251:15	3% 129:8	450 226:9
230 272:18	3.7 283:6,10	47% 296:24
234 78:3 80:19 87:23	30 334:9	4767 269:2

48 127:21		absence 194:17
49% 310:16	8	absolutely 22:22 33:15 88:2 231:12 271:12 299:14 305:13 316:8 326:8 333:7 342:22
5	8 116:20	academy 63:8,10 290:20
5 95:18 96:7	80 229:3,4 351:20	accelerate 253:16
5.2 283:8	80% 103:11 223:12 333:22	acceptable 165:4 339:6
50 182:18	800,000 52:23	access 50:17 116:18 171:2,6 173:13,17 179:8 227:3 243:21,22 252:15
50% 98:22,24 310:21	8:00 116:5	accessibility 120:7 186:22 206:22
500,000 114:18	9	accessible 149:5 203:14 204:4
51 53:2	90% 103:13	accommodating 18:22
51st 204:1	90,000 252:3	accomplish 186:5
52,000 117:12	900 270:18	accomplished 217:21
53rd 259:1	90x 249:24	account 99:11 149:1 155:10
54 127:22	95 279:12	accountability 52:19 58:2 241:15
58% 297:1	96 30:12	accounting 151:21
5:00 230:2	96.5% 64:12	accustomed 85:23
5:30 116:5	99 128:23 129:10	achieve 63:18 101:8,9,12 276:24 277:21
5th 239:1 336:23	99.5% 297:18	achieved 53:2 55:23 100:23 139:21 140:5,15
6	9th 151:13	achievements 252:10
60 127:22 350:3	A	achieving 58:9 98:7
660 183:6	a.m. 116:5	acknowledge 47:1 48:12 58:20 59:11 109:11 132:8 261:11
68,000 113:11	Aaron 15:6	Act 251:18 308:11
69th 138:4	abandon 347:18	action 38:11 51:12 165:17
7	abatement 302:22	active 18:16
7 71:22	ABCDs 18:4	actively 240:6
70 223:11 340:16	abilities 244:1	
70% 98:6 252:7 347:1	ability 56:24 62:4 85:19 139:22 173:5 237:15 253:12 275:23 277:6 278:8 324:3 328:24	
700 157:3,8,14 158:11 176:8	aboard 148:16,18	
75% 54:11 76:21	abreast 47:6 213:14	
7th 161:19 287:8 297:9,15		

activities 24:3	20 278:23 342:6	Afro- 294:24
activity 195:12 202:11	adorn 338:17	Afro-caribbean 295:13
actual 27:8 78:16 204:17 210:9 250:7 259:22	adults 221:23	afternoon 35:8 166:19 189:12 215:1,2,19 216:7 219:2 236:1 238:10 247:16 268:7 274:23 322:10 337:10
Adams 311:3	advance 52:5 56:20 87:18 204:9 221:13	afterschool 116:13
adapt 239:22	Advancement 305:5	age 118:22 302:9 341:15
add 25:8 183:19,22 270:16 289:24 320:14 322:11 329:18 339:18 345:3	advancing 50:19 55:11 207:7 248:7	agencies 201:15 220:23 299:3 300:9
added 18:17 101:21,22 301:3	advantage 50:14 59:18 103:24 114:6 121:20 122:8,12 169:21 170:3,7, 18 171:15,23 172:3 196:24	agency 167:9 200:10 201:4 272:12 277:18 280:18 346:9
addiction 61:8 66:6,23 68:12	advertise 19:8 144:18	agency's 277:6
adding 345:7	advertisement 156:1	aggressive 103:22
addition 63:5 317:7 320:14 333:10 341:20	advertising 56:2 104:4,17 174:14	aggressively 256:8
additional 16:7,13,18 18:18 26:11 30:4 35:2 50:7 53:24 55:2 59:13 159:15 197:22 231:19 254:14 270:17 279:5	advised 133:14	agree 13:8 24:13 268:4 286:18 289:1,2
address 47:10,17 51:11 56:17 61:9 65:18 70:4 76:12 80:24 88:21 115:1 247:1 301:21 308:13 342:1 343:23	advocacy 49:14 52:10 59:24 60:7 82:22 90:14 169:13 170:12 244:12	agreeing 152:7
addresses 81:18 185:18 187:15	advocate 47:7,10 190:12 214:5 331:21	agreement 13:3,7,21 128:24 154:3
addressing 60:24 82:11 212:24 232:1 335:2	advocates 275:3	ahead 95:11 242:15 331:15 338:7
adds 277:19	advocating 59:13 90:17 159:15 169:15	Ahmad 26:14,16 27:20 28:1 29:8,20 31:23 32:3 40:13,14 119:20 125:20 137:11,15 141:24 143:7 298:17 312:12 322:7,8 324:12 327:10 330:18
adequate 57:21	aesthetic 19:19	AI 105:24 198:13,14,20,21 199:1,4,8 345:17
adjust 335:6	Affairs 25:23	aid 237:15
adjustments 193:2	affected 182:1,10	aim 102:12 179:15
administration 170:1 234:10 252:13 277:3 280:12 282:7	Affirmation 293:3,6 294:5,14	Airmen 259:3
Administration's 277:14,	Affirmations 292:22	Alaikum 265:3
	affirmatively 193:17	alarm 79:13 148:18
	affordability 345:9 347:8, 21	alarms 79:11
	affordable 168:9 250:20 307:8	

Alaykum 265:2 alcohol 74:20 120:23 alike 220:7 Allegheny 162:3 267:6 Allen 59:1 alley 235:5 alleyway 296:11 alleyways 296:14 allocate 262:21 299:17 allocated 261:23 allocation 113:3 253:9 allowed 20:17 74:3 allowing 14:8 54:15 319:12 alongside 223:7 228:11 275:5 altercation 334:6 amalgamated 15:24 amazing 116:14 166:23 218:8 225:22 233:18 267:9,21 268:1 276:18 290:18 292:9 295:2 301:1 322:15 323:15 Amazon 319:18 Ambassador 13:18 ambassadors 108:4 ambient 79:17 ambitious 230:10 248:20 Ambler 129:6 130:3 amendment 13:22 amenities 18:10 America 20:2 48:5 amount 181:15,19 255:17 262:21 280:11 340:3,5 amplify 144:19	analyses 27:17 analysis 182:4,12 183:2, 11 184:23 248:23 anchor 283:24 294:7 and-lock 152:4 Andre 216:7 245:23 Angeles 302:10 annotate 98:15 announce 334:11 announcement 107:3 annual 55:16,24 85:5 129:8 182:5 183:3 249:9 annually 98:13 123:4 297:5 313:21 Anthony 125:21 137:12 146:15 203:4 anti-graffiti 312:22 335:23 339:24 anticipate 56:18 90:6 anticipated 50:8 anticipating 328:3 anticipation 254:14 anybody's 176:3 anyone's 172:24 apolitical 20:16 Apologies 112:21 apologize 73:22 180:5 app 162:11 211:2,4 apparent 60:16 apparently 164:15 165:23 appetite 324:6 applauded 285:5 applause 58:22 92:8 214:14 220:3,4 222:9,10, 24 224:3 225:2,4 229:8 230:6 232:18 233:14	235:12 238:6 240:13 242:6 244:4 245:18 246:3,4,20 249:19 257:1 260:9,10 264:19 281:9 285:16 322:4 337:21 338:5 apples 73:9 applications 198:21 199:6 applied 86:9 188:6 apply 120:18 applying 88:19 appointing 36:15 appointment 35:16 appreciated 178:14 approach 73:22 74:24 75:6 94:22 101:21 120:12 130:8 152:18 184:16 195:7 approached 12:5 35:23 46:3 215:16 appropriately 33:8 144:16 190:14 approval 265:16 266:3,14 approve 83:5 approximately 52:23 55:23 226:10 April 33:24 Aramark 319:22 architect 243:1 architecture 302:6 area 18:16 155:4 156:11, 15 205:2 320:2 346:19 areas 19:12 62:12 77:1 86:21 145:21 209:22 210:5 317:12 arena 19:8,9 argue 20:10
--	---	---

arms 159:9 arrest 65:13 149:14 arrests 142:13 arrive 93:22 94:4,6 102:20 125:11 arrived 58:19 art 218:15 219:14 227:10, 11 229:4 230:15 233:21 234:3 237:11,18 240:4,24 243:5 244:15,19,23 246:15,16 284:4 286:20 288:6 289:3 293:14,23 314:5,10 315:21 324:6,7 338:11 339:4 340:11 article 128:17 articulating 98:1 artist 216:8,10 236:8 237:1 238:20 240:6 242:18 290:10 323:14 338:9,20,21 artist-led 231:16 artistic 241:14 244:1 artists 219:11 220:21 223:7 224:6,13 225:1 228:1,11 230:1 233:18 239:2,5 240:18 287:4 289:16 290:8 291:4,9,11 292:2,3,8,10 294:14 304:19 337:15 arts 215:12,21 216:8,14, 24 217:20 218:20 219:11 222:16 224:1,24 227:11, 13 229:2 230:11 233:9, 10,12 234:7 237:3 239:15 240:15 241:7,11,12 242:20 243:18,19,20 244:8 245:14 247:2,22 257:12,15 258:6 259:7 261:12,24 262:23 276:1 283:24 285:2 286:14,23 287:5 289:20 301:15,17 302:15 304:14,16 305:17	312:21 313:12 314:4 315:5,15 319:7 321:2 323:22 335:16 artwork 219:18 238:16 261:5 As-salamu 265:2 Asbury 305:11 336:18 337:8,9,10,19 338:8 Asia 96:16 177:5 asks 351:17 aspect 26:1 61:6 72:20 161:15 332:21 aspirations 219:21 242:24 assault 138:2 assaults 81:11,12 Assembly 47:21 assess 248:23 306:13,20 asset 267:17,21 assets 330:8 assignments 210:17 assist 77:1 assistant 216:10 237:1 238:20 239:10 240:6 assume 150:7 assumed 135:3 assuming 98:17 astronaut 258:21 at-large 275:8 Atlanta 18:4 attend 251:15 attendance 38:16 attention 74:4 99:20 111:13 142:22 166:1 188:12,22 210:22 attentive 94:10 237:23	attitude 259:11 271:9 attract 32:20 63:24 254:2 329:3 Attracting 225:6 attractive 18:12 62:20 105:20 attributing 142:13 audience 240:17 August 87:19 180:11 authority 13:4 57:11 58:5 63:2,19 64:15 67:10 83:11 215:15 235:23 247:3,20 248:7 255:10 342:3 Authority's 56:12 57:23 authorizing 13:1 automatically 79:14 135:2 availability 121:10 avenue 72:4 156:5 205:15 291:15 292:22 293:3,6 294:5,15 329:20 average 273:23 344:11,15 349:10 Aviva 305:5,6 awaiting 192:9 aware 117:19 awareness 139:10 141:7 323:6 awesome 237:21 274:17 295:15 298:10 aye 42:21,22 44:20,21 eyes 43:3 45:2 B baby 21:6 back 27:17 30:3,17 31:5 33:12 45:11 72:1,10,13,
--	--	---

19 77:20 79:7 84:11 88:19 100:9,20,21 102:4, 22 103:18,21 104:5,12 105:2 106:3,8 108:6 112:24 118:17 126:2 137:22 139:18 144:20 146:6 156:19 161:10 179:10 186:24 187:22 192:13 193:4,11 197:18, 23 199:2 208:9,21 216:5, 11 225:12 226:19 233:1,3 236:2,9,22 237:1,13 238:2,11 239:17 242:19 243:19 246:14 263:3,10, 20 264:11 265:4 267:11 277:4 278:1 282:20 283:10 288:14 293:20 299:18 306:4,10 313:4 321:24 322:2 323:21 325:23 334:7 335:3,4 342:5 348:16 349:14	Basic 342:10,14 343:1,12, 22 344:8 351:2 basically 342:19 basis 88:8 165:19 176:14 189:20 192:18 Bass 15:13 22:2,3,8,13, 17,23 23:4 26:3,8 29:23 30:1 32:9 33:9 39:14,15 110:8 119:18 125:19,22 126:8,21 127:2,5 130:9 131:13 132:23 133:2,11 bathroom 111:7 bathrooms 112:7 136:3 battery 273:4 328:16 battle 324:22 beacon 283:17 284:11 beacons 337:6 bearing 144:13 beautification 229:16 262:22 286:21 beautified 262:6 beautiful 218:4 228:19 231:11 264:4 282:13 292:10 294:13 326:3,10 339:18 beautify 262:1 267:18 beauty 228:23 301:4 304:11 324:7 began 243:20 begin 48:11 181:17 208:23 216:19 219:1 220:17 228:3 232:1 247:14 261:10 beginning 123:18 165:20 268:21 316:2 beginnings 241:6 begins 102:19 221:22 behalf 15:17 52:10 73:11 84:1 90:17 169:15 218:7	317:1 behavior 141:15 264:24 behavioral 61:8 65:8 66:22 213:7 225:21 Bekir 36:15 believed 221:22 believes 153:1 230:14 believing 288:4,5 bell 89:7 151:12 175:6 Bellwether 109:21 330:6 belong 221:10 belonging 224:18 belongs 129:20 benefit 29:1 122:21 249:6 252:21 253:14 280:20 307:18 benefited 314:10 Berks 165:22 Bermudez 230:23 best-in-class 58:6 biased 293:23 bid 12:23 13:14,20 131:10,16 big 28:4 64:20 75:22 107:13,14,20 109:6 111:18,20 123:15 155:15 170:15 185:6 217:23 246:3 254:9 288:23 289:20 294:12 308:3 309:16 311:2 313:10,11 336:6 347:24 bigger 111:22 122:13 123:21 253:5 254:17 biggest 111:11 239:16 320:9 347:18 bike 72:8 bill 12:22,23 14:8 37:24 38:11 41:19,22 42:4,12,
back-end 91:20 backlog 56:14 185:22 232:2 301:22 backs 245:13 bad 30:18 73:9 143:15 280:2,3 302:7 ban 75:2,3 bank 15:20,24 285:8 banner 248:16 Barb 285:14 Barnes 260:21,22 261:6 318:19 barrier 172:12,14 328:23 barrier- 337:13 bars 75:21 Baseball 55:7 based 54:11 84:13 198:23 201:22 294:18 baseline 277:5		

18 43:4,10 44:1 310:4 349:8 bill's 349:7 billion 50:2 56:13,19 169:9 181:1 185:11,22 186:15 187:15 203:22 248:18 250:1,2,4,10 bills 45:13,16 248:10 250:14 312:3 biogas 279:15 birthplace 19:20 20:3 48:5 284:23 bit 61:19 112:18 130:7 160:18 203:17 213:21 246:11 272:10 278:10,18 286:10 287:17 297:20 309:21 328:14,17 329:5, 24 349:18 bittersweet 257:6 Black 230:24 258:10 273:21 294:22 blamed 134:24 blank 326:2 blanketing 234:2 blitz 194:2 195:9,10 block 140:14,20,23 228:22 blowing 161:17 165:8,10 blue 235:3 board 36:17 84:3 88:16 89:17 96:14 102:8 198:15 218:8 286:24 boarding 204:3 body 60:2 90:15 212:23 255:21 262:20 268:12 269:18 311:15 bold 294:13 book 234:15 338:1	boosts 159:7 born 91:24 borrowing 56:18 180:24 boss 237:22 Boston 18:4 167:12 bottom 75:21 217:14 bought-in 170:20 bounds 288:10 bow 175:8 Bower 285:14 box 174:17 175:3 bracelet 237:5 bracelets 237:10 Brady 15:9 branches 253:2 brand 250:24 breadth 218:11 break 197:23 Breeze 258:20 346:15 Briefcam 199:12,24 200:2 briefly 134:20 235:15 270:23 brilliantly-painted 303:2 bring 19:22 20:22 29:6 32:15 33:11 94:16 104:12 123:24 147:2 171:15 220:24 276:13,17 284:4 287:11 300:16 327:18 bringing 20:7 88:16 197:18 231:10 288:18 298:22 301:7 brings 28:12 109:15 227:1 259:12 323:21 broad 71:24 90:23 91:10 96:5 107:23 126:17,23 136:11 157:19 158:22 181:2 188:8 306:9	broaden 223:19 broken 136:12 Brooks 40:21,22 83:18 110:7 119:17,21 121:17 124:9 125:13 126:15 171:21 275:11 brother 322:2 brought 23:3 63:21 90:21 107:16 242:19 brown 231:2 258:10 330:3 Brown-skinned 234:24 budget 45:13 47:19 49:9, 11 50:10 51:11,17 58:12 61:3 76:22 82:8 83:5 85:12 90:7 100:2,8 113:1 147:7 151:21 152:12,15, 17,23 160:24 161:1 167:1 180:18 187:5 215:6 217:7 219:9 224:20 249:9 253:8,10 254:6 255:23 269:11 270:3 276:9 277:2,15,16 278:7,23 281:2,7,24 282:1 283:5 296:20 309:6,7 316:21 321:1,14 324:22 342:6,7 344:5 budget also 56:10 budgeted 64:13,16 89:24 budgets 55:19 66:17 170:21 build 54:22 224:16 256:14 257:22 269:14 builder 188:15 205:7 building 52:14 129:21 232:23 301:7 buildings 129:18 177:18 308:6,24 309:3,4,9,14 builds 145:7 built 57:13 188:10 218:21 239:21 250:12 253:24 263:24 268:10 276:22
---	---	---

306:14 342:9,13 344:14 347:13 349:23	C	card 114:4 115:14 118:8, 9,15 123:10
bulk 66:2 69:22 141:20	calculate 245:7	cards 113:5 117:20
bullet- 80:10	calendar 292:1	care 118:24 130:21 319:23 322:3 337:4,5 338:17 348:9
bulletin 141:13	call 18:3 35:18 38:15 45:23 73:10 90:22 98:21 127:7 150:18,23 175:19 215:10 229:5 267:12 302:15 319:23 330:3	cared 223:8 228:23
bulletins 141:10	called 75:18 188:15 199:23 236:6 257:11 267:19 323:22 336:14	career 228:9 240:5 243:6
bulletproof 78:17	calling 111:4 265:19	career-connected 227:14
bunch 25:20 290:21 349:6	calls 84:7	Caribbean 295:1
bundle 308:2,5 309:13	Cambria 336:23	Carlton 158:1 212:7,8
burden 172:19	camera 79:20	Carnegie 315:11
bus 47:11 51:1,2 52:24 55:13 69:18 71:21,22 78:11,16,20 79:22 80:9 81:11 84:8,14,17 85:1,7, 15 86:1,7,10,11 87:10,22 88:20 90:22,23 91:8 94:4 97:9,12 105:20,23 106:2, 5,6,7 108:2 126:16,18,22 127:7,11 134:23 135:1 147:14,16,19 148:17,18 149:5,10 155:11 159:24 160:1 180:9 181:8,10,12 184:4,8 196:16 209:15, 21,23 210:1,14 211:14 212:1 213:4	cameras 105:24 106:1 138:17,18,22 164:16,17 198:13 200:5	carries 43:4 51:21 280:18
buses 69:15 73:6 78:2 81:1,9 82:18 121:24 139:5 155:3 186:23,24	campaign 139:10 141:8 145:6 146:9 248:17	Carroll 84:2 109:13 212:7
busier 99:4	campus 124:3	carry 229:13 234:6 278:8 326:4
business 28:13 29:6 61:14 95:8,13 224:9 249:17	capabilities 13:17 79:19 200:20	carrying 305:7
businesses 111:1 121:23 170:14 191:11 220:23 252:1 307:9 329:3	capacity 115:15,17 118:18 255:19 257:9	cars 101:10 102:9 158:19 167:23,24 181:3,4 187:18 188:3,7,8 203:23 204:17 262:13
butterflies 235:1	capital 45:17,19,20 51:5, 14 55:19 56:12 89:22,24 180:19 185:2,4,20 186:11 207:21,23 208:9 209:5 220:1 245:2 254:19 255:11 308:14,19 309:5, 18,19	cart 162:1
buy 300:23 311:9	Captain 69:5 70:18	Casarez 231:5
buying 276:21	car 70:22 71:17 102:11 128:4,5 188:18,19,20 204:12,19 205:7,8,11 206:1,3,15	case 83:6,8 132:9 149:14 214:10 305:24 310:8
byproduct 279:16	carbon 328:7	cases 129:21 149:8 345:5 347:11
		catch 127:11 143:15
		catching 127:18
		categories 53:12
		CATTO 124:16
		caused 135:5
		causing 149:22 150:20 255:4
		cautious 101:1
		cave 244:24

caves 244:21	296:3	201:7 210:12 225:10 234:11 305:4
CBH 163:21	challenging 53:7 108:16 177:13 218:16	Chief's 77:13
CCP 124:13,14,17 320:17	chambers 247:22	child 339:11
ceiling 343:19	championing 112:21	children 73:6 234:24 257:24 282:23 289:10
ceilings 344:23	chance 25:2 59:17 77:19 178:24 222:2 260:6 261:2 301:13 318:10,12	children's 235:1
celebrate 48:5 339:13	chances 240:20	chime 61:20
celebrated 297:19	Chaney 216:6,7 242:16 244:5 245:22,23	China 177:16
celebrating 231:1,3 339:9	change 65:21 85:22 87:12 95:7 127:8 155:8 163:16 165:23 177:10 183:13 208:19 239:16 241:9 263:23 295:24	choice 73:2 228:3 243:6,8
Celia 230:23	changed 101:18,20 106:13 122:8 271:12 278:24 297:17 348:10,15, 19	choices 51:10 223:19
cell 336:15	changing 86:23 88:18	choose 33:11 244:7 245:12
center 18:15,16,22 32:11 79:15 150:19,22 151:5,8 202:13 238:23 255:3 290:4 302:11 309:1 311:19 316:17 319:19 329:10 338:17 341:22	chapter 138:8 218:23	CHOP 324:18
centers 223:3 271:22 309:2,3 337:5	character 91:15	Ciani 189:15
central 151:8	charge 116:8	Cindy 15:13 22:2 110:8 119:18 125:19
century 95:24	charging 273:6	circles 23:7
CEO 215:14 226:4 247:18	Charles 48:23	citation 77:22
chair 13:19 16:22 22:1,4 25:7 26:13,17 27:19 28:21 31:9,24 32:4 36:7 41:11,17 42:8 43:12,17 44:5 48:20 83:13,15 84:4 90:16 92:13,14 110:5 119:16 125:18 137:10 146:14 160:7 166:13 198:4,10 203:2 274:18 281:12 285:23 289:22 312:9 322:6 335:8 350:19	che-che 260:23	citations 77:17
Chairman 15:8 41:21	cheapest 321:15	cite 201:19 271:21
chairs 281:18	check 70:21	cited 226:15
challenge 65:8,11 108:18 251:11 272:16	checking 69:16	cities 17:14 18:2 23:13 30:14 94:17 106:19 177:14 217:18
challenged 255:17	Cherelle 15:4	citizen 334:7
challenges 57:3 80:12,15 121:1,6 225:21 287:13	Chestnut 128:21 131:2,3	citizens 119:3,4 221:7 223:12 313:19 333:10,11, 18
	Chicago 18:5 167:13	city 12:4,17,19,20 13:2,8, 15 14:2,3,12,21 18:9,10, 15,16 19:5 20:2,11,18,22 21:10 22:18 24:21 26:23 27:9 29:5 30:5,17 31:20 32:15,21 33:13,24 35:15, 22 36:11,17 46:16,22 47:23 48:21 49:9,20 50:18 51:22 52:9 55:4 58:8 59:22 72:6 76:15,16
	chief 12:1,16 48:23 61:19 63:14,15,20 64:2,5 73:24 80:22,23 81:2 84:1 92:18 132:6 139:17 142:11 162:19,22 199:13,24	

86:21 91:16 92:6 96:23, 24 97:2,18 99:5 103:24 110:2 112:11 114:23 115:8 116:15,16 122:2 127:18,20 128:2 147:6 148:21 149:2 168:7,14,23 169:11,22,24 170:8 175:13 177:2 178:1,3 179:1 191:13,16 197:5 205:2 212:6 215:5 217:4, 8,12 218:1,3 219:4,15 220:8,23 221:1 225:9 227:21 228:7 229:7 233:21 234:2,5 239:4 240:8 244:13,14 245:13 249:12,17,21 251:3 252:15,17 253:14,19 254:5,7,19,21 255:7 257:12 258:15 259:8,23 260:2 262:15,19 264:1 266:17 267:2 275:8 276:3,13,21 277:22 280:21 283:22 284:2,22 292:19 293:9 297:6 300:8 301:2 302:20 303:8 305:14 307:6,18 308:23 309:6 310:11,15 311:8,24 317:14 318:14,16 321:3,6 324:5 327:19 328:10,13, 21 335:22 340:4 343:14 346:7	Clarke 346:9 class 112:6 237:6,10 262:15 315:1,15 334:10 classes 63:6 314:11 clean 94:14,24 95:2 104:11 135:13,15,19 157:4 158:5 159:6 168:9 177:19,24 229:20 237:17 248:13 249:23 250:19 251:9 271:6,15 272:19 273:19 279:22 307:5 328:1 cleaner 145:23 221:18 228:18 234:1 cleaners 111:14 157:17 cleanest 252:14 277:22 cleaning 67:20 112:9 156:8,11,16,24 157:2,6, 22 176:10 cleanliness 52:18 110:17 161:16 175:18 176:16,19 clear 32:10 58:1 139:4 168:18 212:16 282:6 286:17 292:4 342:17 Clearfield 311:5 clearing 296:13 CLERK 35:20 38:17,20,23 39:2,5,9,13,17,21,24 40:4,8,12,16,20,24 41:4 46:1 215:11 cliff 130:17 climate 177:10 271:8 310:20 clock 89:8 103:2 close 103:11 218:20 closed 192:4 314:23 closely 34:11 286:7 closer 108:21 154:19	closing 190:22 272:15 closure 190:18 194:4 closures 193:24 Clothespin 110:20 226:1 263:14 264:5 coached 338:19 coaching 222:20 code 66:10 74:18 coffee 129:23 338:24 cognizant 91:13 Cohen 13:18 15:8 cohort 271:2 collaborate 344:3 collaboration 84:10 219:19 227:23 344:10 collaborative 221:11 collapses 343:19 colleague 112:19 136:6 230:12 264:15 325:11 colleagues 15:12 175:16 190:11 215:22 219:6 235:14 260:7 326:17 collection 232:4 304:5,10 collections 302:9 collective 326:7 collectively 299:11 college 124:1,24 125:9 243:8 color 216:4,11 225:12 226:19 236:2,8,22 237:1, 13 238:2,11 239:17 263:3,10,20 264:11 265:4 267:11 301:3 columns 264:3 combined 249:16 comfort 239:18
---	---	---

comfortable 251:18	292:7,12 293:10,11,12	conceive 329:16
comment 161:5	294:11 305:12 308:22	concept 253:22
comments 16:19 37:4,9 156:3	317:15 318:8,11 319:5,11	concern 32:17 128:8 135:7 136:2 147:15,18 187:19
Commerce 298:3	323:24 328:17 330:24	concerned 17:15 151:14 177:6 183:2 209:10
Commissioner 25:14 162:21 223:5	331:3 336:20 337:11	concerns 132:6 207:20
commit 169:7	338:18 339:3 351:10	concert 150:23
commitment 50:5 64:14 169:11,20 170:3,11,22 234:6	community's 165:2	conclude 255:21
commitments 170:5	community- 292:4	concludes 14:13
committed 58:3 170:9,10 268:23	commute 86:5	conclusion 178:13
committee 13:12 14:5 16:20 24:8 37:5,20 41:24 42:14 43:6,21 44:12 45:5 48:20 198:10 215:7	companies 120:5,11 122:13 251:22	concourse 263:13,18
committing 169:6	company 95:3 309:17 319:21	concrete 227:5
common 235:6 283:5	comparable 113:8	condition 176:6 309:10
Commonwealth 117:15 118:13	compared 53:24 69:15 96:16	conditions 239:20 344:24 345:1
communicate 194:19 195:2	comparison 26:21	conduct 66:10 74:18
communicating 163:21	compartment 79:3	conducted 248:22 295:18
communication 47:3 163:10	competence 276:12	conference 275:14
communications 79:9 80:17 132:21 195:6	competition 329:5	confidence 13:15 145:8 228:14 233:8 241:21
communities 51:6 57:6 132:19 144:11 220:10 267:23 275:7 324:20 326:8 337:7 339:16	compiling 193:7	confident 21:18 305:23
community 66:1,9 124:1, 24 125:9 165:24 193:23 194:8 208:3 219:12 220:22 223:23 231:17,22 233:19 239:5 240:17,18 241:17 243:23 256:20 266:19 290:13,16 291:12	complete 248:23 288:1 298:8 344:18	conflict 147:22 148:9 318:6
	completed 76:5 270:12 351:18	confounding 302:19
	completely 91:3 167:23, 24 297:16 299:4 330:11 348:19	congratulations 335:15
	completes 229:3	conjunction 15:7
	completion 320:4	connect 183:24 271:5
	complex 254:24 345:3	connected 134:3 228:9 236:3 251:8 320:16 323:11
	complimentary 327:1	connecting 50:20 274:3 317:11
	component 188:16 347:21	connection 66:5 136:7 226:21
	components 68:17 188:9, 23 345:13 349:23	
	comprehensive 185:17	

connections 87:12 183:22 291:7 consecutive 53:2 consequences 51:21 conservation 301:20 conserve 278:17 consideration 45:8 considered 154:17 182:17 279:4 consistency 226:20 consistent 168:10 consists 102:11 318:1 constantly 136:11,22 156:9 237:9 constituencies 89:18 constituents 28:15 31:16 89:13 128:16 144:11 160:4 169:18 184:7 186:20 191:1,14 211:3 constrain 56:22 constraints 207:3 construction 195:12 204:7 270:14 271:3 273:1,19 319:24 construction- 195:15 consumer 30:15 consumers 252:6 contacted 131:17 containers 74:19 contemplating 106:20 continual 268:13 continue 32:20 45:15 47:9 64:18 84:1 89:10,16 102:12 124:6 139:14 162:12 168:4 178:6 190:12 214:19 244:11 246:17 255:14 272:9,20 273:14 279:23 299:22	313:11 316:19,24 331:20 337:12 continued 50:23 58:14 90:13 170:12 196:22 continues 223:2 269:3 271:17 continuing 35:9 52:3 58:8 continuity 304:18 contract 130:3 152:5,13, 14 153:13,17,23 contracts 69:22 contrast 300:21 contribute 223:23 309:21 319:6 contributing 309:19 contribution 49:22 contributors 228:6 control 74:11 79:14,15 150:19,22 151:5,8 202:12 311:17 convention 13:1 14:1 16:2 18:20,22 20:14 21:4, 17 30:11 31:18 33:11 conventions 18:13 32:15 conversation 72:9 82:5, 24 117:2 118:2 128:9 133:13,22 134:18 135:20 161:2 163:18 220:16 342:4 conversations 60:11 130:15 145:10 168:16 convert 206:17 Conway 335:24 COO 305:4 cooked 336:21 cooperating 152:9 coordinating 272:11	coordinators 319:10 cops 74:16 210:23 copy 31:13 core 57:14 Cornbread 337:18,20 338:9 corner 94:3 251:3 258:21 265:23 cornerstone 234:23 Corps 258:3 correct 69:19 157:10 corridor 287:12,23 cost 16:13 26:23 27:5,9, 21 28:18,20 121:23 155:15 167:11 301:21 308:19 328:22 329:6 cost-containment 55:21 costs 16:7 173:2 174:18 185:14 255:6,13 307:12 308:18 310:3 329:1 331:8 council 14:12,24 15:12 36:9 41:4,14 42:2,5,16,19 43:8,11,24 44:2,14,17 45:10,14 46:5,9,11,17,23 48:18,21 52:9 58:9,14,16, 23 66:14 67:13,16 68:23 70:16 71:13 75:13 77:23 78:13 81:20 83:21 88:23 90:15 92:10 93:16 97:7, 16 99:24 109:9 110:10 114:22 116:17 119:14,22 122:3 125:16 126:15,19, 24 128:3 132:17 137:8,16 145:2,3 146:20 154:9 156:21 157:7 158:1,3 160:10,11 166:9,11 174:4 180:1 189:3,5,11,16,24 193:16 197:13,15 202:24 207:10,12,17 212:12,16 214:2,3,4,15,21,24 215:3, 6 216:15 217:4,8 218:3 219:3,4,17,18 220:24
---	---	---

225:5 235:17 238:7
 242:7,13 245:19,24
 246:5,21 247:1,7,11,16,
 17,22 252:18 257:2
 260:13 265:6,11 270:22
 274:11,15,22 278:5
 281:4,10,16 282:5 283:7,
 21 285:17 286:3,8 287:8
 296:2 297:8,12 298:12,
 14,20 306:5 312:1,4,8,14
 314:20 322:5,9 331:23
 332:1 334:14,20 337:17,
 22 338:6 339:20 340:19
 341:1,17,24 345:14
 348:20 350:12

Council's 49:12 50:23

Councilman 16:24 17:13
 20:24 21:5,20 29:20 39:7,
 19 40:6,10 41:2,20 43:16
 44:6 92:16 97:23 99:22
 102:23 106:11 146:19
 149:17 151:10 152:20
 154:8 157:23 160:9
 166:17 170:23 173:15
 175:5 179:24 189:1
 207:16 208:24 209:8
 211:11 261:16 265:1
 268:3 270:20,24 281:14
 285:12 312:13,19 320:23
 335:10 350:22

Councilmanic 47:13
 109:24 161:20

Councilmember 15:15
 16:23 21:24 22:2 26:8,14,
 15 29:23 31:13 32:3,5,8
 35:1 38:18,21,24 39:3,6,
 10,14,18,22 40:1,5,9,13,
 17,21 41:1,18 42:9 43:13
 59:12 83:13,17 92:14
 97:1 110:6,8,13 119:17,
 18,20 125:19,20,21
 126:3,15 136:6 137:11,
 12,13 146:14,16 160:8
 166:14,15 179:21,23
 187:7 189:8 198:5,6
 203:3,4 207:15 226:14

231:6,7 232:8 261:14,15
 263:9 268:19 274:19,20
 276:6 281:13 285:19,24
 286:1 288:21 312:10,12
 322:7 324:9 335:9 350:20

Councilmembers 12:18
 231:24 298:16

Councilwoman 12:7
 14:17 15:13 16:3,14
 21:22 22:3,8,13,17,23
 23:4 26:3,6,16 27:20 28:1
 29:8,18 30:1 31:23 32:1,6
 34:21,23 35:5,12 36:1,22
 37:7,11,17 38:4 39:11,15
 40:2,14,18,22 41:7,15
 42:7,23 43:2 44:4,22 45:1
 83:19 87:20 88:9 89:5
 110:9 112:10,16 114:14
 115:3,11,21 119:10,21
 121:17 124:9 125:13,22
 126:8,21 127:2,5 130:9
 131:13 132:23 133:2,11
 137:15 141:24 143:7
 160:15 163:6 166:7
 189:10 193:13,18 195:23
 197:11 198:7 199:22
 200:1 201:3,23 202:22
 203:7 204:23 206:4 207:8
 265:18 274:21 276:7
 280:13 281:22 286:2,11
 292:14,20 295:14 297:14
 298:9,19 304:13 306:1,7
 322:8 324:12 327:10
 330:18

counsel 218:12

count 64:13,16 256:22

counties 19:7 146:5,7

countries 94:18

country 167:9 277:23

county 88:23 145:15
 311:4,5 315:20 330:22
 341:6

couple 59:9 60:9 61:3

73:8 77:13 84:11 85:7
 98:3 103:8 107:15 108:1
 122:12 126:1 139:24
 140:11,18 147:4 175:7
 177:7 182:14 187:3 193:7
 195:22 196:7 204:16
 264:5 271:14 281:18
 282:14 296:17 298:3
 300:5 302:3 310:4,13
 348:17 349:15

coupon 308:17

courage 47:16 246:11

court-appointed 341:2,9

cousins 348:13

cover 180:20 344:6

COVID 157:15 264:2

create 122:3 145:18 161:6
 219:14 223:8 240:22
 263:2 329:4 340:9

created 79:21 81:4 217:16
 219:16 220:6 224:2 237:5
 346:9

Creates 239:7 287:10,18

creating 162:14 230:9
 248:19 293:14

creation 140:14 276:22

creative 225:7 234:13
 317:17 318:17,20 319:1

creativity 227:2,17 241:4
 292:11 300:3

credibility 63:21 256:21

credit 13:14 15:21 16:6
 315:15

credits 271:18 311:9

Crew 216:14 222:22,23
 317:21 340:18

crime 53:13,18 62:3 64:23
 65:2 74:2,6,9 81:9 140:6
 148:23 167:14 295:22

criminal 74:22 201:10,20 222:19 309:1	277:4	day-in 159:20,23
crisis 51:10 128:10	cutting 164:21	day-out 159:21,23
criteria 180:13 181:9	cycles 153:17 255:11	day-to-day 132:2 252:24
critical 50:11 52:12 56:17 171:18 227:23 252:1 253:21 270:4 307:11 324:8	D	day-work-and-pay 263:4
critically 208:2 335:7	DA's 341:5	days 102:7 182:18 271:10
crowds 210:2	daily 33:5 52:24 86:5 100:20 163:17 165:19 189:19 228:20 317:24	DBHIDS 163:21
Cruz 230:23	Damon 305:10 314:15,17 317:3,7 332:23	de-escalate 148:8 149:24
cry 260:12	Dan 13:19 15:8	de-escalation 148:6,10
CSX 229:22 338:22	dance 230:24 278:4	de-incentivizes 178:23
CTE 273:10	dancing 234:24	deadline 196:5
cultural 19:14,17 92:1 224:5,12 225:11 234:11 318:21	danger 147:22	deal 71:8 78:3,7 85:9 132:13 154:4 209:16 211:23
culturally 301:23	Darby 138:11	dealing 61:7 65:15 75:14 158:21
culture 54:22 178:18	dare 179:13	deals 294:3
Cup 55:5	Darrell 346:8	dealt 73:11
curious 110:22	dashboard 144:1	dear 119:19 285:21
current 67:5 123:2 176:14 185:9 208:6,13 269:2	dashboards 144:4	debris 296:13
cushion 212:4	Dashell 216:9,10 238:9,10	debt 56:22 186:14
custodial 157:11	data 28:10 29:16,20 31:12 53:22 142:5,10,12 143:9 144:19 198:9 199:1,17 200:4 202:2 255:3 271:21 311:19 324:24 325:14,15, 23	decade 53:16 249:1 253:3
customer 104:19 121:11 167:18 169:23 170:2 173:12	David 13:18 15:8	decades 219:10 233:6 304:15
customers 52:20 57:14 75:8 80:4 93:16 102:8 104:13 121:8 122:16 139:2 183:15 205:9	day 33:1,5 70:19 71:14, 20,22 72:14 75:3 87:10 94:13 95:5 100:22 101:2 102:10,12 104:9,15 105:11 109:2 117:13,22 118:16 142:18 143:2 155:21 162:18 163:12,23 164:13 192:5 225:14 236:23 288:6 318:3 319:23 321:10 337:4,5 338:17	decide 306:21
customers' 94:10		decided 238:17
cut 131:14 179:4 180:14 199:15 203:12 277:15 278:6 345:21		deciding 25:11 115:19
cuts 51:16 85:11,21 88:13 128:11 199:19 209:2,4		decision 125:8,12 201:22 245:10 277:14
		decision-making 151:7
		decisions 57:24 62:10,14 152:23 187:4 255:22
		Declaration 20:5
		decline 53:19 167:15
		decorations 236:11
		decrease 53:24 183:8

dedicate 171:6 dedicated 51:14 52:6 55:1 106:1 111:14 157:6,17 227:10 305:14 dedication 58:21 233:17 260:16 264:10 315:23 316:6 deepen 223:16 deeper 220:14 deeply 143:8 defeat 76:9 defer 16:10 187:2 deferred 185:6 208:12,15 301:24 deficit 51:12 56:6 define 243:24 338:12 degrees 340:2 delay 204:24 205:4 206:6 278:14 delayed 208:5 delegates 29:3 Delegation 52:5 deliver 57:5 248:8 256:10 317:1 delivered 140:17 296:20 delivers 256:17 delivery 120:6 305:21 demand 79:1 94:20 121:6 152:2 271:21 272:6 324:2 demands 55:2 138:13 139:19 democracy 19:21 20:4,7 284:24 285:3 Democratic 12:24 14:1 16:2 18:20 20:8,13 21:3 30:11 31:18 demonstrate 218:15	demonstrated 253:12 demonstrates 57:4 dent 185:21 Denver 18:5 denying 191:10 department 34:8 62:8,19 64:1 65:4 68:16 69:24 70:15 81:5,18 140:13 141:8 173:8 202:14,16 210:14 264:22,23 279:11, 15 280:4 317:10 319:18, 21 321:16 329:15 departments 49:3 255:11 300:8 305:9 307:10 depending 75:4 149:6 150:6 200:17 depends 223:21 351:21 depict 244:13 depictions 244:22 deploy 54:16 68:19,20 211:1 269:15,20 deployed 85:14 deploying 268:10 deployment 77:14 deployments 54:6 depot 88:6 210:19 depot-by-depot 88:4,8 depot-to-depot 88:14 depth 218:11 Deputy 12:1,16 14:19 162:20 Derby 138:3 descoped 185:7 describe 142:20 deserve 175:12 221:8 260:5 261:2 294:1	deserved 281:20 deserves 220:20 design 203:24 205:4,13, 18 207:6 231:11 232:7,13 289:11 323:17 339:2 designed 67:22 255:9 342:24 343:24 designer 243:2 designing 274:6 designs 236:20 desirable 128:20 131:1 309:15 desire 153:22 242:17 destabilized 343:21 destination 18:13 70:8 322:13,17 detailed 33:19 34:16 detection 199:8 determine 180:13 develop 57:9,12 80:20 205:22 227:22 254:9 308:1 developed 130:5 developer 128:22 129:6 232:22 developing 140:20 202:20 development 13:5 198:20 device 94:2 DHS 200:7 difference 54:4 76:19 85:19 86:8 108:8 342:8 differently 228:4 difficult 30:19 51:10 65:7, 10 76:9 77:11 79:6 173:1 192:3 difficulties 103:9
--	--	---

digit 63:9	distributes 226:11	downpour 177:9
digital 93:24	district 19:10 35:22 36:11, 18 109:21,24 117:3,10,16 118:3,11 151:13 156:6 160:21 161:20 170:4,10 189:16,22,24 196:13 197:2 219:17,18 232:8 273:11 283:22 287:8 296:2 297:8 308:5 330:6	dozens 272:21
Dignitary 25:23	districts 47:14 271:20	Draft 25:19
dignity 222:1 227:2 293:24	disturb 73:19	dramatic 157:14 195:5
digress 233:3	disturbance 150:21	dramatically 157:21
dip 105:6,13	disturbances 149:22	drastic 85:22
dipping 328:12	Divers 67:9	draw 16:5
direct 82:23 161:18	diverse 296:22 330:9	dream 173:16 259:5 264:8,13 337:3
directing 108:5 142:18	diversification 329:18	dreams 235:6 243:1
direction 106:17 158:7 168:5,6 214:20	diversified 327:16 331:7	Drexel 197:3
directly 266:5,20,22 267:22 287:21 290:12 291:12 295:11	diversifying 328:7	drilling 34:6
Director 12:3,20 27:14 35:21 36:10 215:12,20 216:23 230:13 264:21 336:20 337:11	dividends 62:24 64:20	Driscoll 39:6,7 48:20 83:16 92:14,16 97:23 99:22 102:23 106:11 110:14 274:20 281:13,14 285:12,19
directors 305:9	divisions 49:3	drive 190:1 279:12 329:6
dirty 135:24	DNC 15:14 23:12 24:17 31:4	driven 248:17 250:1
disaster 244:16	doctor 258:19 324:18	driver 78:11 79:3
disbelieve 143:23	document 95:14	drivers 78:4,16 120:19,20 121:9
discount 118:7 308:16	dollar 255:14 319:22	driving 164:12
discouraged 175:24	dollars 21:8 30:5 31:6 47:22 89:22 120:20 134:14 144:15 169:6 173:3 249:7 252:18 256:9 281:5 344:18	drop 76:20 167:14
discuss 153:16	door 80:1,4 173:11 221:5 227:20	drop-off 209:22
discussed 139:1 195:20	doors 76:7 284:21	dropped 54:10 95:1 99:10
discussions 115:7 125:10 153:19	dots 274:3	dropping 135:17
displays 169:10	double 176:12,17	drops 100:23
disruption 48:3 153:5 196:10	double- 63:8	drug 61:8 66:23 120:22
disruptions 194:1 203:13	doubt 130:10 218:3 305:15	drugs 334:5
dissatisfaction 121:12		Dubow 12:2,19 14:20 16:11,12 27:13,15,23 28:23 277:11
distance 18:24		Dubow's 30:3
distinct 17:23		due 89:20
		duly 42:6 44:3 268:4

Dunn 12:3,21 14:21	effect 65:20 149:12 276:14	embraced 127:17
duo 299:3	effective 142:9 254:10 256:15 344:17	emergency 34:9 54:19 79:23 80:6 190:17 193:21
E	effectively 168:13 277:7	Emily 215:13 246:22 247:9,12,18 278:2 281:20 282:8 284:17 327:12 332:4
E-NEWSLETTERS 89:14	effectiveness 276:11	emotion 241:3
eager 274:7	efficacy 326:7	employed 296:21
Eagles 107:15 108:10,13	efficiency 307:1 308:17 309:16 345:4	employee 140:22 141:21
earlier 109:12 118:17 138:20 186:16 334:1	efficient 167:8 344:16	employees 50:18 57:11 122:20 140:16,21 171:16
earliest 208:22 244:22	efficiently 107:20 181:18	employers 170:19 171:14 228:1 251:9 319:17 320:15
early 67:11 118:21 120:13 263:12 302:14 339:12	effort 102:2 114:22 230:10	employment 122:20 223:17 299:9
earth 196:12 235:7	efforts 159:3 212:18 213:17 307:3 322:22	employs 225:1
ease 41:13,14 214:21 237:19	egress 79:23	empty 224:9
easier 168:24 184:2	El 54:17 69:14,19 70:22 71:8,10 72:14 73:7,21 158:15,23 167:23 239:8 264:12 265:21,22 266:13 267:24 289:5 290:23	enables 49:23
easily 252:24	elected 17:4 138:4 254:23	encapsulation 80:16
East 128:21 131:2	electric 273:5 307:4	encounter 220:8
easy 30:14 246:6 266:18	electricity 250:20 266:11 310:24	encourage 174:10 329:23
echo 145:4 175:9,15 261:17	electronic 94:1	encouraged 176:7
economic 20:23 31:19 32:14 154:16 191:11 221:17 224:22 248:22 250:3 252:16 253:13	elements 206:6	encouraging 106:9 258:5
economically 266:18	elevator 136:9,21,23	encumber 90:2
economy 190:9 274:1 317:17 318:17 331:10	eligible 113:11	end 67:10 69:4 71:14 103:8 134:6 181:18 192:11 193:10 196:5 204:13 234:14 278:19
ecosystem 243:23 314:7	eliminates 180:11	end-to-end 19:6
ed 227:11	Elmwood 205:15	ending 274:12,16
education 20:21 50:21 139:2 173:11 221:17,18 223:14 227:10,13 315:21 340:11	eloquent 316:9	endlessly 275:9
educational 320:22 337:14	else's 322:12	energy 215:14 235:22 247:3,19 248:14,17 249:23 251:9,17 252:22 254:19 255:1,5,12 259:12 264:9 271:6,10,15
Edward 319:20	emailed 337:1	
	embarking 139:9	
	embedded 323:7	

272:11,19 273:19 279:18 307:1,5,7,12 308:11,16 309:16,23 310:3,12,16,21 311:16 313:8 327:14,17 328:1,8 330:10 331:2 342:3 345:3 349:6 energy-efficiency 273:2 enforcement 51:4 54:2 61:6 62:22 63:3 106:1 200:15,16,23 201:1,4 202:9,15 enforcing 66:10,11 74:17 engage 62:5 68:20 120:3 122:24 123:19 124:6 125:2,7 132:17,18 202:15 229:9 243:20 318:12 336:8 engaged 57:15 65:24 120:10 123:8,18 124:5,19 132:7,12 202:10 266:19 333:8 engagement 67:21 184:14 239:6 287:20 290:6,15 291:23 317:15 319:11 331:1 engagements 66:1 engages 226:9 engaging 70:10 121:14 267:22 318:6 engineering 49:6 80:12 enhanced 79:9 80:16 107:23 108:1 enrolled 197:6 252:4 ensure 32:23 34:12 84:20 245:8 256:9 304:17 311:16 312:2 enter 13:2 62:21 201:16 entered 157:16 entire 65:3 83:23 130:4 156:18 162:8 189:17 190:4 229:6 234:12	285:15 287:11 entrance 46:21 entrances 229:19 environment 237:21 255:3 263:24 280:2,17 environments 239:23 251:19 envy 112:6 275:15 envying 275:18 EPA 295:17 equal 13:9 171:9 340:5 equality 319:10 equally 262:7 equals 329:7 equipment 75:19 101:2 equitability 180:14 equitable 180:15 183:12 equity 182:4,11 183:1 eroding 136:21 escape 187:14 escorting 209:23 Esperanza 238:23 290:4 essential 49:22 56:20 175:11 essentially 61:22 117:14 118:6,12 142:19 183:10 199:14 208:14 278:6,14 establish 152:15 219:24 established 256:6 establishing 58:1 estate 129:5 174:8 esteemed 215:22 219:6 estimate 113:3 estimated 301:21 Europe 96:16	evading 77:18 99:14,17 evasion 54:7,8 60:20 75:18 76:20 82:12 98:14 99:10 172:23 173:1 evenings 116:3 192:8 event 15:3 20:20 24:2 108:9 148:12 events 20:1 23:11 25:17 48:7 55:8 107:6,14 109:1, 3 111:18,23 141:6,20 149:4 154:24 155:19 178:4 191:15 195:13,17 231:17 everyday 162:15 evolved 78:23 examining 192:24 examples 129:16 142:14 230:19 250:9 exceeding 248:20 exceeds 324:3 excellent 21:13 26:4 36:2 306:2 exception 276:10 excess 157:2 203:22 excited 23:21 107:10,21 109:7 222:12,14,16 249:3 261:22 269:9 273:13 282:10 287:14 288:8 289:21 295:15 337:12 exciting 205:8 224:11,23 230:19 238:15 Excuse 242:8 execute 187:12 308:9 executive 35:21 36:10 215:12,20 216:23 305:6 exercising 109:4 exhibitions 224:15 exist 183:23
---	---	---

existing 68:5 77:5 exists 67:12 68:1 350:11 exit 80:3 expand 50:17 115:4 116:2 122:3 124:21 125:1 255:19 314:5,11 Expanded 54:14 expanding 117:3 171:24 expansive 168:11 expect 31:21 152:16 194:5 270:5 expectation 94:13 146:8 expected 94:11 315:8 expecting 339:11 expeditious 15:1 expensive 136:19 321:2 experience 69:18 72:18 93:2 158:9 161:9 162:15 164:2 176:3 179:1 228:14,20 240:14 315:17 experienced 26:22 296:4 experiences 176:2 219:21 experiencing 147:21 experts 33:16 34:19 186:8 explain 17:16 18:8 253:19 explained 17:17 exponential 114:10 exponentially 256:4 exposed 338:10 exposes 56:10 expound 278:11 express 292:8 expression 289:17 extended 190:17 extent 121:14	extraordinarily 315:24 extraordinary 217:17 231:4 233:7,16 264:16 304:24 305:16 extrapolate 27:10 extremely 34:15 128:14 161:14 245:15 343:12 345:10 F face 235:4 301:22 faced 51:11 facelift 262:8 faces 56:13 235:1 facilities 111:15 157:4 facility 111:24 204:1 205:18 206:16 facing 225:20 255:2 fact 91:14 121:3 151:14 155:10 205:6 229:21 232:5 275:10,19 301:18 331:14 factor 25:11 factors 105:8 facts 31:15 83:9 145:19 fading 302:24 fail 181:4 failed 304:2 fainted 288:8 fair 92:9 165:4,7 fairly 75:9 fairness 165:12 fall 54:19 176:19 179:9 190:19 273:11 fallen 69:23 families 33:12	family 159:19 160:4 240:9 319:22 350:5 famous 71:21 fan 107:9 108:3 Fannie 350:4 fantastic 22:14 25:4 275:24 fare 50:14 54:4,6,8,10 59:15 60:20 75:17,18 76:6,20 77:8,12,18,21 82:12 97:10 98:5,13 99:9, 15,17 104:1,2 107:4 112:18,24 113:5,12,18 114:4,5 117:3,17 118:11, 12 122:19 123:10 128:11 134:12 169:20 170:4 171:12,19 172:3,12,13,22 173:1,6,14 175:2 fare-related 106:24 fares 99:12 106:20 107:5 115:23 116:2,4 164:21 farms 276:21 fascinating 325:15 327:2, 5 fashion 47:15 214:6 fast- 337:7 fast-forward 95:23 303:6 faster 106:6 308:13 favor 12:22 42:20 44:18 154:20 favorable 32:24 41:24 42:14 43:6,22 44:12 45:6 favorably 21:19 fear 301:12 331:2 feasible 243:6 featuring 230:16 federal 54:18 82:3 114:16 120:15,17,20,21 270:8 271:13
---	--	---

fee 13:9	find 27:18 172:20 184:13 193:1 195:19 260:20 267:19 284:15 327:2 340:8	flexibility 56:23
feed 174:16		floor 239:4
feedback 60:6 64:7 75:8 88:12 132:14 174:5 192:10	finding 66:4 347:6	floral 236:20
feeds 174:23	fine 46:9 59:4	flourish 289:18
feel 216:24 223:8,9 228:22 233:17 243:13 244:23 245:5 303:23 304:23 305:21,23 317:12 318:12 326:4,8	finish 197:21 350:24	Flower 108:23
feels 148:15 152:22	finished 300:14	flowers 234:22
Felicia 36:16	finishing 296:16	flowing 268:20
felt 23:20 243:3,9	fire 47:16 164:18	Fly 319:20
fence 236:11	fireflies 234:22	flyer 155:6
Fest 108:3	fires 164:13	flyers 155:4
festival 289:20	firms 252:8	focus 52:16,21 156:17,18 177:24 183:16 211:9 237:6,18 253:3 317:10
fewer 99:14,17 123:13	firsthand 316:18	focused 51:9 81:5 147:7 176:9 292:5
field 86:6 108:5 143:1	fiscal 45:13,18,20,21 49:10 51:9 55:15 56:8,9 57:18 58:12 185:2,3,8,9 208:13,14 219:8	focuses 210:14
FIFA 25:20	fish 177:21	focusing 74:9 295:3
fight 47:7 178:7	fit 252:24	fold 123:24
fighting 82:23 281:1 285:13	five-step 92:20	folks 34:4 62:21 66:3 70:7,11 72:22 77:12,18 86:18 94:15 100:1 108:5 112:4 114:8 123:22 140:3 146:3 160:20 172:14 186:7 260:23 267:11,17 293:1 318:1,5,13 319:10 342:11 348:2
fight 209:14	five-year 50:5	folks' 85:19
figure 124:20 136:14,24 165:16 186:9 281:23	fix 51:21 132:24 136:20 344:22,23	follow 98:4 142:8
figured 266:13	fixes 51:24	follow- 110:12 138:14
figuring 115:8	fixture 298:5	food 129:23
fill 259:15	fixtures 296:15 297:10,22 298:2	foot 26:20
final 82:7 180:18	flag-making 231:18	footage 200:8
finalists 18:1	flame 279:12	football-sized 343:10
finally 180:23	flaring 279:15	footprint 125:1 328:7 329:19
finance 12:3,19 27:13 49:5	flashing 302:8	force 25:13,16 53:16 60:22 65:17 301:9
financial 56:4 130:17	fleet 56:15 101:6 102:15, 16,19 157:5 187:21	
financially 301:23	fleets 95:19 96:3	
	flex 47:21	

forefront 62:1 91:16 327:19 foremost 148:5 foreseeable 102:18 forever 235:7 327:6 foreword 234:16 forget 111:4 217:24 form 13:20 227:24 241:5 244:12 formidable 315:16 forms 338:11 fortunate 286:6,13 forward 26:20 35:8 36:24 47:24 54:12,24 55:14 58:7 90:8 93:3 110:2 139:15 187:23 196:21 213:16 218:6 227:5 234:7 235:23 244:14 245:4 269:8 292:17 307:19 337:8 Forward- 45:19 fossil 330:15 fought 314:3 found 85:18 243:18 344:7 foundation 260:21 343:21 350:5 foundational 331:19 founded 20:10 fourth 53:7 frame 63:13 framework 198:17 frank 71:18 145:22 346:15 Frankford 72:12,13 158:23 239:11 free 75:24 76:3 97:8,11 178:17 227:13 284:9 337:14	frequency 182:17 183:19 frequent 93:21 183:24 203:12 frequently 70:21 190:16 211:7 friction 173:10 Friday 165:6 Fridays 105:12,13 friend 236:4 friends 159:22 front 221:5 frontline 140:15,16 141:2 148:6 frugal 256:5 fruit 144:13 frustrated 160:18 161:15 frustrating 300:18 frustration 306:11 frustrations 175:17 177:4 fuel 279:22 330:14 fuels 330:15 full 13:15 54:9 74:3 77:8 80:15 98:5 125:3 182:24 223:9,15 248:22 269:23 270:1 273:8 full- 76:5 full-height 76:6 fully 50:6 55:4 56:24 181:1 191:8 206:10,11 208:8 270:2 280:9 fully-encapsulated 79:2 function 277:7 fund 51:15 115:19 171:3, 6,8,10,11,12 173:17 180:21 181:1 190:13 249:17 272:20	fundamentals 52:17 funded 93:7,12 115:14 181:5 206:10,12 207:5 208:8 255:15 280:11 309:23 funder 283:20 funders 254:18 269:7 funding 47:8,18 49:14 50:7,9 52:2,7 55:10 57:7, 17,21 60:8 82:3 90:1 93:13 114:12 115:9 117:16 118:6,14 119:8 123:3 128:10 154:2,6 159:16 161:8 162:13 178:8 185:4,5,14,17 186:2 187:10,13 206:7,9 207:2,3 208:19 214:12 253:19 254:2,5,8,14,16, 21 256:7 262:24 268:10, 22 269:4,8,19 270:2,8,9, 15,16,19 276:24 277:4 302:21 323:12,13,23 345:12 350:4 351:16,21, 23 fundraising 13:17 funds 14:6 50:1 51:13,20 59:14 90:2 151:22 268:19 269:16 279:5 323:19 funneling 320:19 future 30:6 31:7 49:18 51:14,23 56:23 58:7 102:19 119:5 151:22 175:4 193:24 194:10 228:6 233:9 296:12 futures 228:16 FY2028 180:21 FY27 180:17 223:15 231:19 253:7 254:6 G gain 27:24 28:12 210:22
--	---	---

gaining 228:13 galaxy 235:6 galleries 289:15 Game 55:7 gamut 273:8 gap 69:3 garage 130:6 garden 258:24 Garrett 12:1,14,16 14:20 15:22 16:9 17:11,22 21:2, 7 22:6,11,15,21 23:2 25:5 27:12 29:15 31:10 33:14 35:10 gas 279:24 345:22 349:8 gates 54:5,10,13 76:6,13 77:8 98:5 99:6 262:19 gateway 262:1 338:10 gateways 229:15 Gauthier 38:21 146:18 160:14 166:16 179:23 189:9,10 193:13,18 195:23 198:6 203:3,7 204:23 206:4 207:8 261:15 274:19,21 276:7 280:13 281:22 gave 102:1 192:2,3 194:18 240:22 Gay 225:11 234:12 325:11 gear 191:4 196:4 general 46:2 47:21 48:17 135:21 171:8,11 189:12 203:8 213:22 214:7 generally 87:7 105:11 111:9 148:21 202:18 generate 174:19 211:4 generated 249:11 250:2 generating 30:4 175:1 250:19	generation 161:7 305:3 generational 250:13 gentleman 59:4 66:18 246:13 321:22 geographically 169:24 geopolitics 255:4 Georgia 17:20 geothermal 327:23 328:19,22 329:13 331:8 Germantown 132:10 get all 106:15 get almost 330:1 giant 324:5 gift 276:2 340:1 Gilmore 12:7 14:17 16:3, 14 21:22 26:6 29:18 32:1 34:23 35:5,12 36:1,7,22 37:7,11,17 38:4 40:1,2 41:7,15 42:7,23 43:2,18 44:4,22 45:1 83:14,19 87:20 88:9 89:5 126:3 197:11 girl 312:15 give 68:17 74:12 77:19 113:22 118:7 130:24 165:24 166:1 181:13 186:7 235:21 240:22 242:3 246:1,3,23 250:8 260:8 268:6,9 276:15 279:8 291:2 299:23 301:10 304:2 306:8 307:14 314:7 332:4,14 347:12 350:1 giving 100:6 128:19 173:4 291:24 glad 135:12 136:1 142:1 248:1 323:10 325:9 336:12 glass 80:11	global 322:13 globally 330:13 Gloria 231:5 goal 50:20 58:9 101:5 102:13 104:8 105:2 141:19 153:13,15 174:3 181:12 248:20 277:1 290:11 291:10 goals 277:1,20 310:20 Golden 215:11,18,19 216:2,17,21,22 219:5 220:5 222:11 223:1 224:4 229:9 230:7 232:19 233:15 235:13 247:5 257:8,10 259:9 260:11 261:20 263:7 276:5 283:3 288:2 292:16 293:5 302:1 304:21 312:17 314:13 319:15 323:9 325:8 332:22 333:4 334:8 335:17 336:12 339:17,22 340:23 341:4,19 351:19 good 12:8,15,17 17:7 22:5,7 23:20,21 26:18 32:7 36:6 46:12 48:17 59:6 73:13 100:19 101:14 110:4,16,18 119:4 125:12 126:8 137:17,18 143:14 160:16 162:23 163:4 166:18 179:5,7 184:13 187:20 189:12 204:8 215:1,2,18 216:6 218:16 219:2 232:14 235:24 238:9 244:3 247:16 251:11 268:7 271:6 272:16 274:23 280:16 296:5 299:24 322:10 327:9 334:21 337:9 350:13 governance 198:15,17,19 government 147:10 174:22 200:10 249:18 253:2 255:7 271:13
--	--	--

Governor 47:20 52:4 Governor's 50:8 GPS 79:16 grab 212:19 graduate 340:2 graduated 251:5 272:13 graffiti 229:14 302:21,23 335:20 336:6 337:15 338:9,14 grant 251:12 272:17 granted 304:5 grants 171:13 173:19 270:8 graphic 243:2 grapples 144:5 grasp 179:11 grateful 49:11 50:22 189:21 234:8 Graterford 314:22,23 gratitude 233:8 288:3,9 Grays 204:2 great 18:9 26:13 59:21 65:21 85:9 87:3 89:7 97:10 106:12 121:18,20 132:13,14 134:5 151:11 197:10 200:2 226:12 229:19 237:22 246:18 261:19 274:12,16 284:1,3 285:20,22 288:17 295:6 304:6 316:16 328:12 329:20 330:16 335:15 336:24 Greater 250:22 green 46:18 58:20 84:4 158:5 159:6 229:20 235:8 251:6 271:2,9 350:5 greener 221:18 228:18 234:2	greenest 252:15 277:22 greening 324:19 Greenway 259:2 grew 126:13 127:17 GRIT 251:7 272:12 ground 85:16 163:23 235:6 grounded 219:20 group 60:2 81:8,15 162:24 210:13 211:10,19 288:23 groups 32:13,21 33:9 220:22 231:23 308:5 grow 71:16 103:23 105:1 106:6 223:16 227:18 240:23 253:4 269:3 278:8 growing 60:22,23 71:22 103:16 105:4 154:15 243:3 grown 251:24 256:4,5 growth 53:3 103:6,17,18, 21 110:1 241:6 255:4 311:19 Guaranteed 251:17 308:11 guaranty 13:11 14:5 guess 32:17 69:2 158:19 160:17 161:3 310:17 guide 55:16 guiding 57:24 108:5 Guild 222:6 317:20 340:18 Gunaydin 36:15 Gusset 289:5 290:10 gussets 265:19,20 266:10 guys 17:5,8 96:17 164:15 298:23 301:8	H H.O.M.E. 254:16 268:21 269:8,16,19,24 270:15,19 Habitat 257:20 haiku 234:18 half 99:16 167:11 171:7 204:12 205:8 250:17 278:16 291:4,5 347:1 Hall 46:22 72:6 76:15,16 99:5 239:4 hallelujahs 235:3 halls 87:16 213:23 hand 72:1 93:24 114:4,9 123:11 hand-in-hand 80:19 hand-step 152:3 handful 328:20 handle 27:14 handling 25:17 34:19 hands 23:14 142:24 233:13 235:7 happen 96:8 135:6 137:1 149:15,16 164:2,3 182:13 201:11 207:2 212:1 226:24 280:10 284:22 300:1 303:4 311:20 328:4 334:3 happened 27:2 131:5 138:2 155:8 195:19 209:13 212:10 300:11 happening 23:12 70:14 74:6 88:5,7,15 143:11 147:23 150:7 163:19 165:14 182:6 211:15 243:7 344:21 happy 14:14 28:19 36:20 119:6 182:15 248:4 297:11 311:24 326:15
--	---	---

330:17 331:20 334:11	headquarters 151:9	helping 57:12 68:13 70:12 147:8 170:12 227:4 229:17 260:5,19 271:4 332:15 346:12
hard 15:6 47:2 58:21 59:5, 24 84:22 203:5 217:6 255:22 256:14 260:15 268:5 280:15 327:13	heads 321:16	helps 29:6 121:21,23,24 172:16 199:14 227:19 237:16,18 254:13,18,21 274:4
hard-pressed 169:3	healing 241:3 246:17	heroes 231:5
hard-working 252:19	health 61:8 65:8 66:23 68:12 73:16,18 213:7 225:21 250:15 264:24 290:4 308:22 309:1,3 344:23	hey 96:20 104:14 155:6
harden 77:5,9	healthier 251:19	hiatus 195:12
hardening 99:19	hear 17:5 19:2 26:19 32:18 35:14 45:16 100:10 135:13 136:1 142:1 160:18 167:1 176:1,7 184:22 212:15 222:23 235:4 261:22 273:16 276:11,12,14,18 277:24 278:3 292:6,12 300:2,16 323:4 334:21 341:10	high 64:10 71:6,7 72:23 91:2 96:13 168:1 182:17 272:6 320:3,4
harder 76:8 191:14 259:14	heard 17:6,7 71:4 89:7 110:13 151:12 174:5 222:2 311:3 323:2 325:13 330:20 348:6	higher 99:13 185:24 349:8
Harley 12:1,14,16 14:20 15:22 16:9 17:11,22 21:2, 7 22:6,11,15,21 23:2 25:5 27:12 29:15 31:10 33:14 35:10	hearing 14:9 15:2 19:3 37:23 38:5 45:12 85:4 154:12 177:3 208:4 215:6 271:20 300:7 336:16 350:15	highest 61:22,23 183:20
harm 278:7	hearings 55:15 147:7	highest-ever 167:18
harming 277:6	heart 217:15 221:12 239:6 285:22 287:9,17	highlight 166:23
harms 190:24	heat 345:6	highlighting 85:6
harping 100:4	heaven 196:12	highlights 269:10
Harrisburg 60:2 82:8 90:18 100:2 128:14 145:13 159:10 169:14 173:24 190:7 213:22,24	heavy 80:13 205:17	highly-efficient 251:1
Harrity 15:15 16:23,24 17:13 20:24 21:5,20,24 40:9,10 42:10 44:6 146:17 160:13 166:15 179:21,24 189:1 298:17 312:10,13,19 320:23	height 54:10 76:6 77:8 98:5	highly-skilled 94:9
Harvey 46:18 58:20 84:5	held 220:18	highway 201:11 229:16, 22
Haverford 315:12	helped 51:15 218:5,14 219:24 225:9 237:6 310:14	highways 262:2,6
havoc 212:22	helpful 155:2,14 324:23 343:12	Hilferty 13:19 15:8
Hawk 216:12,13 240:14 242:12		Hill 128:21,22 131:2,3
head 20:1 27:16 64:13,16 109:13		hip 179:5
headphones 150:13		hire 64:18
		hired 251:22
		hires 189:15
		hiring 64:17 273:12
		historic 64:22,24
		historical 92:2
		historically 53:13
		histories 219:20

history 53:20 167:16 231:15 244:19,23 293:10 294:2,22 295:1,3,13 312:21 hit 105:16 187:9 212:5 hold 119:11 holding 206:9 hole 343:10,15,17 home 94:23,24 106:15 116:19 213:3,5 242:19,20 243:15,19 250:16 267:13, 15,19 268:10 315:4 332:19 341:13 343:2,8 344:9,12,15,19 347:10 349:9 homebound 289:8 homeless 309:2,4 homelessness 61:9 66:24 343:4 homes 267:20 268:15,24 269:2 270:7,13,18 342:16 344:3 346:22 347:17,19, 23 348:15 349:3,17 350:3,6,8 honest 91:3 320:9 honestly 175:9 218:10 283:18 326:19 honing 323:17 honor 89:8 217:10 233:23 257:5 259:17 338:3 honored 217:1 247:21 honoring 230:21 honors 234:4 hook-up 134:8,10 hop 75:19 hope 171:24 256:17,22 258:12 260:20 277:24 280:22 281:6 293:7 300:22 321:22	hoped 298:7 hopeful 23:18 194:1 196:4 204:18 hoping 176:18 293:18 294:6 329:13 horizon 307:17 horrific 133:24 138:1 Hospital 319:19 hospitals 289:9 host 12:24 13:11 14:5 330:5 hosted 13:24 hot 307:23 hotel 18:18 29:1 hotels 18:14 21:11 hour 117:22 310:6,7,10 hours 74:15 118:10 183:6 190:23 199:15,19 house 60:4 184:9 238:24 306:13 343:16 household 71:17 households 250:11,17 252:4 299:10 347:3,4 houses 87:17 177:17 257:22 299:13 housing 130:5 171:9 225:20 275:13 277:21 hub 99:7 226:1 hubs 111:11 huge 25:11 26:1 178:4 206:24 272:2 284:19 288:3 300:22 Hugh 59:1,6 human 139:9 140:10,24 141:17 226:21 323:5 Humanity 257:21	hundreds 21:8 224:13 226:18 296:21 HUP 324:18 hurdles 120:17 hyperinflation 185:13 I ICE 200:7 202:3,5 icon 259:22 idea 27:4 120:10 178:16 291:19 339:14 349:18 ideas 80:20 103:22 124:10 186:4 identified 181:23 337:16 338:15 identifies 202:9 identify 200:18 identity 293:11 illustrator 243:2 image 258:16 imagination 178:23 225:9 242:23 imagine 179:3 261:4 284:12 immediately 63:1 Immersive 251:6 impact 20:23 31:19 158:12 195:6,15 235:16 248:24 257:18 261:19 263:24 283:2 284:19 287:24 288:17 290:18 292:23 316:18 324:14,20, 24 325:6,17 327:3 332:14 334:23,24 impacted 222:18 271:15 323:15 332:16 333:13,20 impactful 173:18 252:20 281:3
---	---	--

impacts 310:11	incidents 142:16 195:3 201:10	263:23 332:16 333:12 336:3 340:21
impenetrable 76:10	include 14:8 79:22 124:14 349:24	induce 114:7
implement 203:13	included 236:10	induces 174:13
implementation 51:2 55:12 84:19 86:16 87:18 88:20 89:3 182:8	includes 183:7 203:23,24 204:2	inducing 123:7
implemented 86:12 184:20	including 33:22 51:1 56:14 76:15 88:22,23 230:10 231:5 238:22 296:11 308:24 322:16 350:9	Industrial 13:5
implementing 85:11	income 249:16 250:19	industries 271:16 272:9
importance 241:23 269:11	incorporate 339:2	industry 273:16 274:5
important 19:9 25:9 99:24 100:8 147:11 169:8 172:1,6 175:3 178:5 206:2 208:2 217:24 230:11 245:15 253:20 263:16 271:7 327:13 331:12 335:7 351:3	increase 100:6 113:6,9 124:11 143:17 157:15 183:5,7 211:16 255:5	Inevitably 228:3
importantly 50:4 60:6	increased 56:1,21 122:1 157:21 185:14	infectious 259:11
impressed 110:18	increases 62:16 128:12 129:9 151:23 152:16	inflation 245:7
impressive 275:3	increasing 62:4,7,12 154:14 164:21 271:21	information 28:14,22 29:12,24 32:10 87:5 89:11,15 155:13,18 156:23 170:6 193:23 194:6 199:20 202:2 291:3 296:1
improve 54:23 104:6,9 153:20 193:22 255:12 295:21 307:11	incredible 179:13 296:22 299:7 301:9 305:8 313:18 343:13	infraction 75:5
improved 53:10,20 250:15	incredibly 252:9 306:19	infrastructure 30:24 54:3 56:17 57:20 77:6,10 96:11 99:19 109:17 176:22,23 203:20 205:23 207:1 248:10 252:2 254:12 255:12 262:23 273:6 307:11
improvement 53:12 104:22 276:20 296:9	incur 152:16	infrequent 184:2
improvements 54:3 55:22 208:1	incurred 13:10 61:13	infuse 316:21
improves 277:17	indefinitely 208:5	ingenuity 300:3
improving 185:23 229:11	Independence 20:5	initial 55:17 184:23
inaudible 155:21	independent 248:6	initially 248:21
incarcerated 261:5 333:16 341:12	indirectly 333:13,20	initiate 118:4
inch 108:20	individual 98:16,17 258:16 290:11 336:5 338:2 349:3	initiative 95:13 229:17 254:17 287:10
incident 107:19 142:21 148:13,14 201:20	individually 131:9 299:13	initiatives 50:17 51:5 159:6 245:14 342:20
	individuals 71:1 76:2 251:8 258:8 260:5 261:1	innovation 328:15
		input 49:13 199:16

inroads 186:18 204:8	intercity 146:2	invite 225:23
inside 71:19 164:8,13,19 212:22 258:23	interest 178:12 202:19 212:17	involved 20:18 124:7 232:9 238:21 260:4 287:5,19 320:2 329:21
insight 117:1	interested 268:13 327:23 348:5,8	ipad 338:24
insist 77:21	interesting 288:20 293:7, 13 344:7	isolation 226:22
inspections 101:8	interests 73:12 339:3	issue 60:12 66:24 73:16 77:22 139:13 151:1,2 158:7 194:14 311:21
inspiration 217:18 247:24	interfaces 199:7	issued 54:19 77:17
inspire 259:4	internal 198:24	issues 47:10 61:7,10 65:9,14,16 66:11,23,24 70:5 74:5,21 75:2 78:4 81:19 85:12 103:20 106:24 138:12 156:9 158:20,24 163:3 193:6 255:1 266:12 324:8 343:3,20 345:2
inspiring 218:5 225:22 300:4 315:24 326:11	internally 95:8 187:12 198:24	items 101:12 144:5
instability 225:20	international 29:4 262:11	iteration 254:9
install 54:13 76:24 266:4 329:4 348:14	internationally 303:8	iterations 84:16
installation 76:5 273:4,7	interns 228:10	Itzkowitz 35:21 36:6,9 37:15
installed 76:13 203:15 239:3	introduce 77:4 118:18 317:22	IV 187:21
installing 239:11	introduced 79:2 116:1 139:24 171:1,5	IVS 101:7 187:24
Institute 315:12	introducing 118:21 318:18	
institution 197:5 259:23 283:24	introduction 105:15	J
institutional 304:18	inundate 87:1	
institutions 19:14,17 109:23 124:4 170:7,13 197:1	invaluable 226:6 283:12	Jackie 12:3,21 14:21
instructed 150:10	invest 49:17 244:8 245:6	jail 341:6
instrumental 81:8 143:4	invested 249:8,14 255:15	Jamie 146:18 160:13 179:23 189:8 198:6 203:3 261:15 274:19
instruments 117:18	investing 57:8,15 144:12 174:11 225:8 342:12 347:10	Jane 215:11,19 216:22 219:5 257:8,10 259:9 260:14,23 261:20 266:23 267:10 275:2 282:10 286:14 287:3,16 290:2,17 301:1 312:15 317:8 321:8 322:11 323:1 332:10 333:24 335:14,17
integrated 47:13	investment 52:11 130:1 173:20,22 174:7,10 218:14 231:20 248:18 249:2,21,23 250:7,10 253:13 256:3 275:16 282:2,8 283:16 299:15 309:5 325:6	
intense 108:20 187:23	investments 56:3 272:3 284:17	
interact 318:5		
interacted 317:12		
interaction 173:7		
interactions 69:23		
interactive 232:15		
intercept 142:4		

January 102:22 192:18	219:6 256:12	145:10 169:21 170:2,7,18
jeopardy 148:15	joining 37:13 46:15 49:1 59:5	171:15,23 172:3 196:24 278:8 347:20
Jesse 230:22	Jones 38:24 232:9	kick 109:3
Jim 15:15 146:17 160:13 166:15 179:21 298:17	Josh 47:20	kicking 85:4
Joan 231:1	judgment 241:9	kickoff 108:24
job 22:14 24:7 35:20 36:9 65:22 66:20 78:5,10 101:14 116:14,21 132:10 168:20,24 176:11 216:24 238:14 246:18 275:24 276:22 285:20 295:2 299:7 313:22,24 320:19 336:24 350:14	July 53:1	kid 72:7 242:22 245:9
jobs 50:21 173:11 223:13 248:12,19 250:11 251:9, 11 271:6 272:16,19 320:2,5 345:20	jump 75:22	kids 117:12 284:9 290:21 313:1
Johnson 41:5 45:15 46:6, 12,24 48:18 58:17,24 66:15 67:14,17 68:24 70:17 75:14 77:24 78:14 81:21 92:11 97:8,17 109:10 119:15 125:17 126:16,20 127:1 137:9 145:4 156:22 157:8 158:4 160:12 166:12 189:6 193:17 197:16 203:1 207:13 212:13 214:16 215:1,4 216:16 219:3 225:6 235:18 238:8 242:8,14 245:20 246:1,6, 22 247:8,12,17 257:3 260:14 265:7,12 270:23 274:12,16 281:11 285:18 286:9 298:15 306:6 312:5,9 322:6 332:2 334:21 337:18,23 338:7 339:21 340:20 341:2,18 342:1 345:15 348:21 350:13	Jumping 261:21	kilowatt 310:5,7,9
	June 51:18 109:6 236:16	kind 18:1 31:14 34:2 61:20 86:16 94:21 108:11,23 109:5 112:5,6 120:14 127:10 128:24 129:2 141:19 144:6 150:12 156:17 170:24 171:22 177:22 181:23 194:24 196:11 199:18 206:12 210:19 225:14 262:8 267:18 275:20 278:15,17 279:13 280:6 298:5 311:12 332:18 343:5
	justice 222:7,9,19 241:18 260:4 309:1 313:2,17 317:10 340:17 341:21	kinds 130:14 137:3 239:20 272:24 280:9 345:2
	justice-impacted 341:14	King 231:1
	Juvenile 341:21	knew 143:17 154:5 188:19
	juveniles 315:20	knowledge 194:18 240:1
		kudos 24:24 285:14
	K	Kya 36:16
	K&a 226:2	L
	Kalahari 346:2,3	
	Kapust 305:5	LA 302:11,15,17
	Katherine 83:14	Lab 224:2,11 231:14 282:1,21 283:2,13,14 284:6,14 285:9,18
	Kathy 126:3	Labelle 22:20 23:1
	keeping 47:2,6 135:7	labor 273:17,18 329:2
	Ken 36:16 67:8,9 84:4	
	Kendra 83:18 110:7 119:17 275:11	
	Kensington 159:1 162:3, 18,24 165:15 226:2,8 236:6 239:7,9 265:17 266:2,5 267:5 287:9,18, 23 291:7,9,14 294:20,24 321:11 350:2	
	Kerner 36:17	
	key 50:13 59:14 63:12 72:20 103:23 109:14,22, 24 114:6 121:19 122:7,11	
join 247:9		
joined 12:2 48:22 215:21		

Labs 283:21 lack 47:18 136:3 138:11, 12 163:9 335:3 ladies 281:16 land 179:17 278:21 Landau 40:17,18 83:17 110:6,9 112:10,16 114:14 115:3,11,21 119:10 136:6 198:5,7 199:22 200:1 201:3,23 202:22 231:7 286:1 298:17,19 304:13 306:1,7 landlords 123:19 landmark 230:15 landscaping 320:1 lane 51:3 lanes 106:2 135:1 language 93:10 large 18:21 25:17 30:21 99:18 122:21 170:13 210:2 232:1 239:6 299:12 largely 74:6,18 larger 291:17 300:19 largest 53:15,18 167:15 169:23 170:2,19 203:20 Lascaux 244:21 245:1 lastly 106:17 151:11 209:9 launched 225:15 law 61:5 62:21 63:3 200:14,16,23 201:1,4 202:9,15 212:4 law-abiding 73:13 law-enforcement 202:10 Lawndale 207:22 208:6, 11 Lawrence 84:4	laws 200:11 Lawson 48:24 63:14,15 64:5 73:24 81:2 84:2 139:17 142:11 162:22 199:13,24 201:7 210:12 lawyer 258:18 layer 268:21 LBT 91:5 LC 27:5 lead 101:11 109:14 294:14 331:16 Leader 43:17 83:14 92:12 110:7 275:11 leaders 88:24 190:6 228:6 233:20 299:14 leadership 17:18 33:21 47:15 59:16 81:16 88:3 95:9 101:19 146:22 151:17 213:18 214:9 230:9 234:11 259:10 261:8 287:3,4 304:16 305:3,8 leading 58:3 315:6,7 leads 240:15 League 55:7 232:11 leaks 302:7 leap 289:22 learn 118:23 188:9 194:15 242:2 244:19 294:11 338:17 learned 85:8,9 123:8 188:5 193:20 241:4,17 252:21 330:23 338:13 339:24 learning 132:15 188:21 227:14 228:10 251:19 lease 131:8 leased 129:5,17 133:19	leases 347:12 leasing 133:14,17 leave 33:10,16 236:23 238:4 245:11 320:10 343:15 344:2 leaving 146:5 316:10 led 13:18 15:3 84:3 251:1 left 63:2 79:24 243:9 legacy 337:13 legality 133:16 legend 337:23,24 legendary 338:2 legends 230:21 legislation 171:4 Legislative 52:5 legislatively-mandated 49:24 legislators 128:14 Lehigh 136:11 239:1 266:7 lends 256:21 lessens 172:19 lesson 86:9 132:15 194:24 312:21 lessons 88:18 188:4 193:19 330:23 let's-find-a-way 321:18 let-out 210:8 letter 13:13 level 47:5,9 64:12 96:13 115:20 146:1 147:21 196:19 210:19 260:2 308:12 level- 204:2 levels 53:14 114:12 115:8 122:6 123:3
---	--	--

leverage 50:7 173:19 254:15 330:8 350:10 leveraged 350:7 leveraging 173:23 LGBTQ 231:4 libraries 306:18,20 307:23 308:2 library 307:13 library's 307:22 lie 244:3 life 73:2 147:3 162:18 172:24 188:17,18,19 223:23 231:10 233:1,3 237:14 244:10 287:11,15 315:17 life-cycle 188:16 lifetime 63:15 233:23 lift 339:13 lifted 171:21 lifting 178:14 lifts 294:2 light 96:14 235:2,8 264:17,21 295:23 301:3 316:15 lighting 234:21 lights 296:12 350:14 Lil 212:19 limit 56:23 limitations 89:21 limited 65:19 66:3,12 69:6,7 70:1 114:20 121:9 187:5 192:18 198:21 199:2 lines 47:2 48:13 127:23 128:1 147:5 155:3 196:17 318:7 Lisa 305:4,7	list 37:21 208:9 252:23 297:21 307:24 323:2 listen 22:19 79:18 320:24 350:17 listening 220:15 246:10 291:12 listens 237:23 literally 209:21 live 79:19 85:17 116:6 138:17,21 139:22 142:3, 14 145:14 146:7 184:11 236:16 321:12 322:18 lived 267:13 lives 220:18 222:21 235:16 258:8 261:3 293:19 304:12 315:7 326:12 living 164:8 226:22 228:21 lobbying 17:9 60:7 local 50:1 68:11 78:3 80:19 186:6 219:20 224:17 249:22 251:21 259:5 289:16 located 272:7 location 77:9 112:3 locations 76:14 111:11,17 lock- 152:3 lockstep 152:21 logic 277:13 long 16:1 64:19 82:21 92:24 101:11 133:8 137:1 140:1 142:19 143:2 153:9 158:15 221:21 230:14 259:20 287:12 306:14,19, 24 313:9 320:21 351:15 long- 277:7 304:19 long-lasting 250:24	long-term 49:18 51:21 56:24 57:17 65:12,20 66:4 250:20 325:6 332:13 345:8 347:7 longer 199:11 298:6 longstanding 207:20 look-in 139:22 looked 181:9 looming 151:16 loop 134:6 Los 302:10 lose 74:23 283:10,11 losing 98:12 349:5 lost 75:1 294:22 302:20 339:12 lot 19:16 21:14 28:6 30:24 31:14 65:5 74:8 78:6 93:6 105:7 110:21 124:8 127:14,15 128:5 136:19 140:6 151:12 154:19,23 156:7 184:21 211:17 224:21 236:5 238:15 241:17 258:9 271:12 283:4 284:18 286:18 289:15 290:15 294:17,24 295:20 305:2 310:18 312:24 322:1 324:14 lots 174:23 206:14 288:19 308:2 329:11 loud 149:21 150:9 212:15 Loughead 35:17 38:14 45:22 215:9 Louisiana 17:20 love 129:15 151:17 197:4 228:18 230:22 237:20 305:13 312:20 320:12 321:19 324:10 326:18 346:20 loved 237:11 238:16 289:6 333:14
---	--	---

low 53:14 65:2 185:13 320:5,6 low- 250:18 347:2 low-income 50:19 172:2, 8,11,13,20 173:4,9,14 180:17 347:4 lower 109:21 121:23 248:9 310:3 311:23 lower-income 347:22 lows 64:22 Lozada 26:15 32:5,6 34:21 35:1 39:10,11 137:13 146:16 160:8,15 163:6 166:7 226:15 285:24 286:2,11 292:14, 20 295:14 297:14 298:9 Lozada's 265:18 lucky 233:17 lunch 214:23 lure 104:3 M Madam 22:4 25:7 31:8,24 36:7 made 15:24 21:9 23:20 30:16 32:9 62:1,9,14 63:13 76:18 78:20 80:8 85:19 86:7 138:13 151:6 187:20 193:2,3 256:3 266:4 275:9 290:12,21 306:20 Madness 109:2 Mae 350:4 magic 283:19 339:10 magical 71:15 magnitude 108:9 main 139:15 291:10 maintain 50:11 255:18	303:15 304:9 309:9 maintaining 176:15 maintenance 156:10 176:13 188:14,24 204:1 205:17 206:15 297:24 maintenance-wise 195:16 major 53:4 55:7,13 96:2 210:1 259:2 289:13 311:15 343:2 majority 43:17 83:14 92:11 189:24 make 14:4 17:2 28:9 29:9 31:12 69:6 73:2 77:11 83:6 86:3 88:24 91:7 104:10,11 105:19 125:9 129:13 131:4 136:24 150:23 152:22 156:13 163:23 167:4 168:23 172:24 174:24 176:17 178:7,10 183:23 184:4,16 185:21 186:17 187:18 195:14 201:21 205:5 208:8 212:11 234:5 240:5 243:14,15 245:9 251:2 252:13 255:23 259:14 260:24 269:20 271:23 275:22 279:23 282:6 291:16 304:8 305:19 312:24 321:3 330:15 332:24 340:14 344:16 347:16 349:5 maker 284:10 makers 228:5 makes 18:12 31:3 108:16 184:1 226:13 making 47:12 54:4 59:16 62:18 69:5 82:10,16 83:10 114:23 127:6 143:12,19 145:19 149:13 187:4 194:12 204:8 221:3 233:24 236:11 322:12,16 335:1	Malik 264:16,17,20 265:3, 9,10,13 290:1 Mall 72:13 man 242:9,15 Man-man 212:19 manage 311:18 312:2 management 34:10 318:4 manager 46:2 48:17 135:21 189:13 203:8 213:23 214:7 236:8 258:5 291:1 managers 157:12 228:12 Mann 319:19 manufacturer 204:11 manufacturing 273:5 298:6 March 109:1 Mark 298:18 335:9 350:20,21 market 162:4 191:21 272:8 329:2 Market-frankford 33:2 91:10 95:21 157:18 188:2,7 marketing 174:15 211:13 married 68:16 Martha 72:15 mass 32:12 33:7 47:8 118:22,23 214:12 Mat 290:9 matching 50:1 171:13 173:19 matriculating 338:14 Matt 236:7,18 237:21 290:19 matter 115:18 124:23 135:16 241:4
--	--	---

matters 229:2 240:20 maxes 349:20 Maynard 277:10 Mayor 12:1,16 14:19 15:4 97:14 110:3 112:24 214:1 221:14 224:20 230:8 234:9 253:9 278:20 Mayor's 50:10 254:16 261:24 Mayors 218:2 MBES 296:24 Mccormick 47:5 81:24 82:1,2,5 Mcwhite 314:15 317:5,7 320:13 333:2,6 meaning 224:19 meaningful 184:5 means 86:17 92:3 96:10 125:6 326:14 351:11 meant 86:4 169:16 250:7 343:5 349:21 measurable 52:22 measure 158:12 332:18 measures 45:18 mechanics 136:20 mechanism 51:19 Medicine 123:16 meditate 237:19 medium-sized 251:21 meet 49:23 56:24 94:19 108:17 153:15 162:17 184:10 186:20,21 187:7 196:4 200:22 255:20 292:1 311:11 meeting 14:12 38:10 41:12 95:10 121:6 145:12 155:7,20 165:18 190:16 227:3 288:22	meetings 163:11 meets 162:23 252:17 310:20 member 24:17 33:9 171:21 178:14 216:14 226:4 268:12 270:23 members 16:19 23:8 36:8 37:4,19 46:16 48:21 52:9 60:3 70:19 84:3 145:11 159:20 165:9 193:24 194:8 197:17 212:16 214:2,3,4 218:3,5 219:4 247:1,17 256:20 257:4 258:4 261:11 269:23 270:1 318:11 339:3 memorandums 200:24 Memorial 232:24 memory 294:3 memory's 18:3 Memphis 290:20 men 273:22 316:11 mental 68:11 73:16,17 mention 91:19 131:21 134:20 297:13 mentioned 64:21 65:9 128:9 136:5 139:19 177:3 267:10 290:2,17 291:15 317:9 331:9 333:24 335:22 336:1,5 mentioning 266:24 mentor 338:23 mentored 338:20 mentors 240:18 Mercy 238:24 mess 101:15 messages 165:5 messaging 139:4 met 240:10 257:10 305:10	mic 79:17 Michael 84:2 109:13 216:1 Michelin 21:12 Michelle 305:11 microphone 286:10 mid-april 191:3 middle 230:1 middle-income 347:23 midst 60:10 Mike 83:16 92:14 110:4 212:6 236:1 274:20 281:13 miles 116:6 283:23 million 13:13 31:20 49:22 50:6 55:24 56:7,8 98:13 113:2 123:3 129:10,12 180:19 249:8,11,13,15 252:6 253:9,11 254:7 255:16,22 269:17 277:5 279:3 297:3,5 303:17 309:7,19 316:20 322:20 millions 21:8 173:3 191:6 mind 80:23 268:6 mine 153:23 minimal 195:14 minimum 268:24 280:11 343:6 minority 110:7 131:20,22 183:8 275:11,12 minority-owned 252:8 minute 112:23 142:23 336:19 minutes 94:4,6 148:22 182:18 196:7 mirrors 264:1 misconceptions 342:18
--	--	--

missed 17:4	money 21:6 100:6 116:22 121:22 127:14 130:13 134:11,13 137:3 144:12 238:3,15 251:2 263:1 276:15,16 284:19 299:17 300:12 303:16 304:1,3 314:4 321:17	314:24
missing 98:22	monitoring 138:16,22 142:3,15 164:17 199:5	moves 58:5
mission 52:17 170:17 304:9 324:11 340:12	month 75:10 103:7,18 192:12 193:11 194:6 196:5 303:11 339:11 351:24	moving 30:20 47:24 54:12,24 66:2,8 68:4 90:8 189:19 190:4 228:17 269:7,10 292:17 320:5
mistake 194:20 340:14	monthly 290:6	multi- 153:12
mistakes 241:8	months 53:2 86:13 101:18 102:3 103:8 190:15 192:4,16,20 195:22 220:15 236:14 282:15 325:20	multi-tasker 284:7
mix 341:13	moon 179:17	multi-year 153:23
MLB 25:20	morale 159:7	multiple 152:6 287:21 343:2 344:4
Mobile 19:11	morning 12:8,10,15,18 22:5,7 26:18 32:7,19 36:7 37:2,14 48:18 137:17 160:16,17 166:18 230:3	multiplier 276:14
mobilize 264:9 267:1	Moscow 243:10	multiply 276:16
mock-up 204:12 205:8	Mother 238:24	multiplying 280:20
mode 71:19	motherhood 339:10	municipal 63:7 248:7 249:7
model 225:16 308:10	mothers 339:15	mural 215:12,20 216:8,14, 23 217:20 218:20 219:10 220:1,14 222:16 224:1,24 227:11 229:2,12 230:11 231:10,21 232:20,23,24 233:9,10,12 234:6,15 236:9,19 237:3 238:22,23 239:2,15 240:15 241:7, 11,12 242:19 243:18,19, 20 244:8 245:2,14 247:2, 22 257:12,15 258:1,6,21, 23 259:2,7 261:12,24 262:23 276:1 285:2 286:23 287:5 291:22 301:14,17 302:12,14 304:14,16 305:17 312:21 313:12 314:4 315:5,15 318:9 319:7 321:2 323:4, 22 335:16 336:24 338:22 339:8 351:17,24
moderate- 250:18	motion 41:18 42:10 43:4, 13 44:7,19	muralist 239:14
moderate-income 347:2	motivate 63:24	muralists 290:24
modern 76:1 93:20 95:19 168:1 203:14,23	MOU 201:14	murals 219:16 220:10 233:2 235:10 239:1,10 240:7 258:7,14 260:1,3
modernization 105:21 203:10,19	move 30:14,19 41:22 42:1,15 43:19,23 44:13 70:12 86:10 110:1 119:1 141:19 161:24 213:16 218:6 223:13 227:5 235:23 271:17 307:19	
modernizing 57:19	moved 42:11 44:8 186:18 196:12 302:14 303:13	
modes 106:7		
modifications 78:19 80:9		
modified 79:22		
modular 327:24		
modules 330:20		
mold 343:18 344:21		
mom 339:12		
moment 52:12 59:9 150:2 156:18 255:20 257:6 261:10 307:16		
moment's 151:4		
momentarily 48:24		
moments 148:1		
momentum 52:14		
Monday 165:6		

263:2 264:6 275:17,20,21 289:13 290:3 294:13 301:19 302:17,22,24 303:2,9,14 305:12 316:22 321:6 322:14 323:24 324:1 325:17,24 331:17 336:4,20 337:4,11 351:10,12,20 Murch 305:4 muscle 109:4 Museum 261:6 museums 284:2 music 150:9,12 230:20 Myers 231:2	Navy 328:15 330:6 necessarily 83:8 98:7 175:21 288:24 needed 14:6 54:23 63:22 131:18 174:22 191:22 273:2 297:23 345:12 negative 27:1 neglect 228:24 negotiate 152:14 negotiating 173:24 negotiations 124:20 152:19 153:3 282:4 Negro 232:11 neighborhood 204:22 219:23 221:4 223:2 224:5,12 228:12 229:1 258:19,24 259:6 282:23, 24 285:5 286:16,19 291:17,19,20,21 293:2 294:21,23 295:5,12 299:12 338:16 350:15 neighborhoods 32:16 128:20 166:2 221:19 228:19 229:11 234:3 248:11 258:11 276:3 280:21 287:22 291:16 299:11 319:7 neighbors 147:10 180:17 220:22 292:24 339:7 346:16 348:12 nephews 73:20 348:12 nervous 128:15 net 26:24 27:22,23 28:11 network 30:22 51:1 55:13 84:9,14,18 85:1,7 86:1, 10,11,20 88:20 105:21 181:8,10,13 182:24 183:7 184:4 networks 203:14 never-ending 269:4	newest 189:14 news 100:19 121:18 NFL 25:19 nice 17:6 30:17 152:2 196:15 232:21 Nicolas 59:12 112:20 146:17 160:12 166:14 261:14 275:12 nieces 73:19 night 190:23 191:22 192:23 230:2 251:3 nightlife 21:15 Nina 119:20 125:20 137:11 298:17 312:12 322:7 nodded 193:17 non-criminal 65:16 non-fare 174:17 non-minority 183:9 nonlong-term 66:13 nonserious 142:17 normal 191:2 193:4,12 normalizes 178:20 North 126:13 127:12,22 136:9 348:4 Northeast 207:22 210:4 231:14 Nos 36:13 37:24 38:1,12 43:14,20 44:10 45:3 note 156:6 noted 268:4 314:20 notes 42:8 44:5 notice 151:5 196:9 210:2 notified 84:24 November 191:3 nuclear 328:1 330:2 331:2
N		
Nadia 216:9 238:10 264:15,17,20 265:9 288:13 289:23 290:1 305:10 names 177:15 naming 174:15 narrative 145:18 narrow-mindedness 178:22 Nastell 163:10 Nastell(sic) 162:19 nation 56:16 nation's 55:6 national 13:1 14:1 15:16 16:2 20:8,13 21:3 31:18 138:7 nationally-recognized 253:23 natural 279:24 nature 74:22 142:17 navigate 254:24		

nudge 295:8 nuisance 149:19,21 150:8 number 63:9 77:15 80:8 87:16 98:24 99:13 100:23 112:1 113:17 114:11 122:23 124:4 163:1 178:10 182:19 194:14,23 210:17 283:9 305:1 320:15 325:19 332:8 333:17,19 349:1 numbers 30:7,21 60:15, 17,19 64:4,8 82:9 98:20 145:16 179:12 182:14 249:6 270:11 297:8,12 325:2 332:14,23 333:5 334:22 nurturers 339:15 O O'NEILL 39:22 O'ROURKE 41:1,2 112:20 137:14 146:17 160:12 166:14,17 170:23 173:15 175:5 261:14,16 265:1 268:3 270:20,24 275:12 O'Rourke's 187:8 Obama 345:19 obligation 174:21 obligations 13:10 obvious 226:24 occasions 47:23 occur 195:3 occurs 89:4 148:14 149:9 odd 222:15 offense 148:24 149:9 offer 18:11 26:2 37:23 154:11 225:18 243:12,17 offered 239:15 336:21	offering 70:11 97:8 337:13 offers 226:14,16 office 34:9 132:12 189:17 199:3 265:18 308:24 310:14 338:2 341:5 officer 62:17 63:16 143:1 225:11 234:12 305:5 341:3 officers 25:21 62:13 63:1 64:18 65:18 67:24 68:19 70:10,20 77:16 150:4 164:6 202:5 209:20 officials 254:23 offline 331:22 offset 279:19 OIC 346:11 oil 345:21 older 313:5 oldest 56:15 Olney 210:4 one-pager 31:14 one-time 51:20 one-year 53:19 167:15 ongoing 111:13 115:7 153:19 268:23 onset 331:4 onus 145:17 open 74:19 87:17 117:21 118:9 120:9 121:3,4,13 164:13,18 191:18 192:11 227:20 235:5 261:1 opening 109:2 196:6 334:12 openness 117:1 opens 79:17 173:10 operate 82:18	operating 45:17 51:17 55:19 58:12 101:22 147:19 185:5,19 209:17 219:9 226:7 269:11 270:3 operation 61:12 66:18 67:6 69:10 156:24 157:2 operational 55:22 191:8 operationally 53:7 operations 27:8 49:5 51:15 54:21 180:20 191:2 199:4 277:18 operations- 198:22 operator 78:21 79:5 80:1, 5 135:3 147:20 148:14 149:11 150:10 155:6 operator's 79:24 operators 79:10 81:11,12, 15 87:22 88:5 134:21,23 135:7 147:14,16,17 148:7 209:15 210:18 opinion 38:8 opportunities 59:19 76:11 100:4 191:12 221:24 222:4 223:20 263:4 318:18 320:20 329:12 337:14 340:6 opportunity 14:23 32:14 49:8 50:22 58:10 69:11 95:17,23 113:24 172:15 181:14 208:18 221:17 224:22 252:16 257:7 259:18 275:4 335:4 336:22 338:16 opposed 42:24 44:23 optics 133:24 optimal 280:17 optimistic 192:10 optimize 120:6 option 62:20 160:22 161:21 165:3
--	--	---

options 63:4 Orchestra 230:22 order 69:6 94:19 95:6 101:13 154:2,6 161:6 201:5 313:3 322:20 324:21 orders 54:19 ordinance 13:22 organization 65:1 101:19 109:15 122:18 138:7 153:21 168:20 200:7 256:16 288:18 334:24 organizational 57:24 organizations 122:14 219:13 272:21 300:17 317:16 318:22 319:1,5,9 organized 211:19 organizers 106:23 107:4 original 113:14 133:5 188:24 Orleans 22:10 Orthodox 72:15 OTIS 109:14 outcome 325:1 outlined 92:21 outlook 203:10 output 250:3 outrageous 130:12,14,23 outreach 163:19,22 213:8 319:12 overcome 120:18,24 overhaul 188:14 overhauls 187:24 overhead 206:17 overinvest 245:6 overlap 299:5 342:12,18, 24	overlooked 178:16 oversee 157:13 oversight 192:9 193:8 198:12 overwhelming 256:19 owned 129:5 Ownership 67:20 P p..m. 214:22 p.m. 116:5 P3 174:6,10 PA 271:4 paid 13:6,9 15:19 64:20 228:10 237:3 painfully 160:23 paint 316:3,4 painted 235:3 painting 230:1 241:1 244:20 266:20 paintings 290:22 Pam 47:4 pandemic 103:12,15 panel 45:23 215:10 panels 346:13,17 pantograph 199:6 206:18 Papal 111:21 paper 128:18 324:19 parade 107:15 108:10,14 paratransit 121:7 parcel 130:4 parents 84:24 333:14 Park 232:24 Parker 15:4 97:14 230:8 234:9 252:13	Parker's 221:14 224:20 253:10 parking 56:2 130:6 Parks 223:4 319:21 Parkside 232:17 Parkway 19:15,16,18 parole 334:4 part 26:1 34:20 49:9 61:2, 11 67:5 70:2 71:16 99:18 101:23 104:1 106:2,18 110:1 111:11 119:6 121:16 122:22 127:19 133:12 139:6,8 140:18 153:2 158:8 163:14 170:21 174:3 181:9,22 182:4,11 184:14 185:1 208:11 217:13,24 220:11 233:5 234:19 257:11,15, 17 258:6,22 261:24 270:1 279:1,2 289:12 291:20 292:19 294:16 311:1 316:21 336:9 347:13 part-time 125:5 Participant 333:4 participants 113:7 223:7, 18 313:20 314:9 317:11 319:13 320:16 333:21,23 340:16 participate 59:18 171:14 197:8 198:16 223:22 278:22 336:4 340:22 participated 24:6 participating 197:3 228:9 333:9 participation 38:7 50:13 122:6,8 123:2 124:11 131:20,23 224:17 296:23 297:2 parties 124:18 partner 160:5 217:10 272:20 290:18 344:13
---	---	--

partnered 219:11	pay 13:8 28:16 62:16 77:12 173:6 188:11,22 225:19 269:24	111:6 113:23 114:1,24 123:12,13 134:24 136:13 138:17 143:13,15,17,24 144:14 155:11,17,22 158:11 161:19 162:6,17 163:12,13,24 164:7,22,24 174:11 177:4 181:14 184:10,21 190:12 194:22 196:14 209:14 211:17,19 220:12 221:9,24 222:17 224:7,8 225:8,20 226:18, 21 227:3,8,12,16 229:5 230:3 233:11,16 234:4 235:5 237:8,24 239:23 240:2,8,19 244:10 246:2 256:10 257:14,16 258:9 259:4 260:18 263:17 266:15,20,22 267:16 272:13,18 274:7 284:5, 13,20 285:3 288:24 289:8 291:24 293:16,19,21,24 294:8 295:3,6,11 296:21 299:8 303:9,12 304:2,4 305:12,20 310:10 313:5 315:1,3 316:1 319:23 320:1,5,19 321:10 326:4 330:5 331:1 332:6,19 334:10,14 335:2,4 337:24 340:6,8 341:8,10,15 343:7 346:12 347:6,13, 16,18 348:13 350:16 351:12
partnering 263:11 286:22 288:16	paycheck 226:17	
partners 34:7 122:22 123:9,16,21 159:18 213:11 229:20 233:19 256:19 270:10	paychecks 116:23	
partnership 14:7 16:1 49:12 67:20 110:3 120:4 124:13,21 196:22 214:1 217:15,22 264:23 346:11	paying 28:6 98:19 129:7 347:8,9 349:7	
partnerships 33:20 50:12 68:6,11 70:1 200:16 223:17	payments 14:4	
parts 120:13 191:13 258:15 266:16 286:15 293:8 300:8	pays 117:17 297:3	
party 17:7 20:8 23:23 24:3,15 28:4,8,17	PEA 247:20 248:5,17 249:2,14,22 250:1 253:4, 7,11,13,21 255:8 256:12 268:5,9 274:24 276:8,24 301:15 306:3 307:18 332:6	
passenger 90:5,7 149:10 150:20 202:17	PEA's 249:9 252:11 276:11 277:4,15,17	
passengers 139:3	peace 235:9	
passes 117:4,14 171:16 173:17	PECO 251:10 271:22 297:22 310:4,7 329:22 346:12 347:9	
passion 242:18 259:10 264:10	pedestrian 208:1	
past 57:4 81:7 110:16 122:9	peers 191:12 241:24 339:6	
path 63:18 97:5 241:5	pending 270:7	
pathway 318:23 340:9	Penn 123:16 197:2 325:14	
patience 280:15	Penndot 180:19	
patrol 74:15 142:15	Pennsylvania 13:12,16 15:3,10 23:9 31:17 133:10 138:8 190:5 250:5 295:19 319:18	people's 158:9 311:6 312:2 326:12 348:12,14
patrols 54:17	Pennsylvania's 190:9	percentage 90:1,3 171:8
patron 150:12	pensions 154:13	perception 60:17 158:9 175:20
pattern 211:5	people 19:5 21:16 23:21 28:3,5 30:21 31:4 32:13 50:21 71:6,7,12 73:15 85:23 86:3 87:8 95:4 96:19 98:18 99:14 104:5, 12,14,20,21 105:8 106:3, 14 107:17,18 108:11	perfect 102:14 179:6 perfectly 272:7 perform 94:12 229:12 period 48:4 52:15 54:1 73:21 249:10 permanent 47:18 60:8 93:12 214:11,16,17
Patti 22:20,24		
Pattison 72:3		
pause 194:18 235:10		

permanently 171:11	221:8,16 225:17 228:21	pick 13:12,16 15:3,9 31:16 163:2 344:2
permeates 178:20	229:16 232:11 234:1,13, 20 235:2,22 243:12,17	picked 291:5,13
permission 267:5	244:24 247:3,19 248:13, 16 250:3,22 251:12	picture 22:24 142:23 300:19
permit 42:3,17 43:9,24 44:15 45:8	252:3,14 254:3 256:11	pictures 143:3 297:16
person 67:8 149:20 235:20 259:14 321:18 336:10 337:16	259:1,9,24 272:6,23 273:22 279:23 280:22	pie 256:4
person's 69:17	284:23 291:6 296:8	piece 129:4 206:2 253:21 266:21 309:8 319:2 349:22
personal 33:12 217:3 249:16	299:1,19 300:1 303:5,13 311:8 315:2 318:16,20	pieces 266:4
personally 59:23 313:13	322:13,17 327:20 328:10 342:3 346:7,22 347:19	pilot 122:13 199:7 204:19 206:1 223:17
personnel 138:24	Philadelphia's 30:6 49:10,21 170:1 225:7 231:3 262:2 329:19	pipeline 254:19 334:18
perspective 90:7 283:1	Philadelphian 255:6	pipes 161:23
PGW 251:10 279:11,20,21 329:8,12,19	Philadelphians 113:4 114:15,18 127:16 250:8 251:5 252:19 253:15 271:5	pique 202:18
phase 58:4 68:2 86:15,24 87:19 103:19,21 120:14 180:10,12 182:8	philanthropic 256:8	pitch 254:17
phase-by-phase 184:16	Phillies 109:2	Pittman 82:1
phased 55:12	Phillips 39:18,19 41:18,20 43:13,16 125:21 137:12 146:15,19 149:17 151:10 152:20 154:8 157:23 160:9 178:14 203:4 207:15,16 208:24 209:8 211:11	place 24:23 30:18,24 31:3 55:11 102:4,21 129:24 159:14 175:14 191:15 194:9 195:2 209:12,18,19 226:20 238:5 240:23 243:23 279:24 303:10 305:20 333:21 351:16
phases 55:17 85:10 86:12,19 87:15	Philly 71:23 72:5 96:20 97:4,22 124:3,5 126:14 127:12,13,23 190:3 191:10 229:7 230:20 272:17 276:19 302:4 348:4	placement 313:24 333:22
PHDC 349:14	Phoenix 260:18 314:24 334:9	places 17:21 19:7 31:1 104:23 223:8,22 264:7 272:4 275:23 283:23
phenomenal 24:7,10 25:1,14 140:8 289:18,19 340:4	phone 161:17 163:2 165:9,10 336:15	placing 111:23
Phil 305:11 336:18 337:8, 10	photos 164:5	Plain 134:9
Philadelphia 12:17 13:2, 4,24 17:19,23 18:6 22:18 23:14,17 24:10,22 25:10 26:10 31:2 33:24 34:8 52:13 59:22 72:16 90:18 91:14,23 92:7 97:3 110:2 117:11 121:21 124:1 136:10 146:6 148:21 149:2 159:12 169:12,22 178:2 189:19 203:16 215:5,14 219:13,24	physical 81:12	plan 45:20 47:12 50:10 55:16 57:13,21 75:9 85:5 92:20 95:13 109:22 165:17 180:21,24 181:3 182:5 183:4 187:22 192:7 207:24 240:3 253:4 277:7 279:2,3 336:21
		planned 55:8

planners 236:12	60:21 62:7,13,15,19 63:7, 10,15 64:1,18 65:4,17 66:19,20 67:2,24 68:15 69:11,12,24 70:3,10,14 72:21 77:14,16,22 79:12, 18 81:4,17 99:20 141:8 142:18,22,24 147:23 148:22 149:1,13 150:1,24 151:1 164:6 173:7 202:13,14 210:1,7,13	power 83:4 218:15 233:21 271:24 272:4 288:5 299:2 330:2 339:10
planning 49:5 108:18		powerful 220:6 226:13 275:3
plans 54:13 107:22,24 108:3 110:23,24 180:8		powerwashing 158:17
plant 279:18 298:6		PPD 201:24
plastic 78:15		PR 159:5
platform 289:17 327:16 328:8 331:7	policing 209:10	practicing 57:18 228:1
platforms 96:12 202:7 204:3 205:16	policy 198:14,20 200:4 202:1	prayer 234:23
playing 150:9	politely 150:15	preceding 122:10
pleasant 183:13	political 20:14,19	Preliminary 53:22
pleased 49:15 153:4 192:5 219:7	pop 211:6	prepandemic 103:3 106:13
pleasure 17:24 22:9 109:19	Pope 25:18	prepare 233:5
plug 19:24	population 125:4 322:19	prepared 107:1 262:24
plugged 137:21	Porch 264:17,21 316:15	preparing 33:6 107:8 318:13
plumbing 251:21	port 272:3	presence 41:10 72:21 109:12 210:1,7 211:16 338:4
Poconos 346:1,4	Porta 111:3	present 37:22 39:8,12,16, 20 40:3,7,11,15,19,23 41:3 64:12 80:12 163:13 325:14 326:21
podium 246:7	portable 111:19	presentable 321:4
point 28:2 29:17,20,24 30:3 31:12 32:9 95:12,14 126:4,10 127:6 129:3 156:22 171:4 190:10,13 244:17 258:20 279:5 281:21 290:14 345:16 346:14	position 56:5 63:22,23 131:7 137:23 173:24 259:13	presentation 23:19 67:4 182:6
pointed 132:16	positions 50:6	presenting 182:7 183:4
pointing 167:3	positive 26:24 30:9 143:5 159:13 237:16 299:21 318:15	presents 277:3
points 168:21 294:8	possibilities 23:22 179:3	preservation 344:19
poised 337:12	possibility 223:10 224:10	preserved 250:14
polarizing 218:17	possibly 263:5	President 13:19 14:24 41:5 45:14 46:5,9,11,23 48:18 58:16,23 66:14 67:13,16 68:23 70:16 75:13 77:23 78:13 81:20 83:21 90:15 92:10,17 97:7,16 98:2 99:24 109:9
Pole 199:6	posted 155:5	
poles 265:23,24 297:22	potential 148:9 151:16,19	
police 25:13,16 27:1 34:8 48:23 53:15 54:5,15,16	potentially 152:8 173:8	
	Potty 111:3	
	poverty 114:16	

110:10 119:14,23 125:16, 23 126:16,19,24 128:3 137:6,8,16 138:6 145:2,3 146:20 154:10 156:21 157:7 158:2,3 160:10,11 166:10,11 168:19 174:4 179:19 180:1 189:4,5,11 193:16 197:14,15 202:24 207:11,12,17 212:12 214:15,24 215:3,13 216:15 219:3 225:5 235:17 238:7 242:7,13 245:19,24 246:5,21 247:7,11,16,18 257:2 260:13 261:17 265:6,11 270:22 274:11,15,22 281:10,15 282:5 285:17 286:3,8 298:13,14,20 306:5 312:4,8,14 314:20 322:5,9 331:24 332:1 334:15,20 335:11 337:17, 22 338:6 339:20 340:19 341:1,17,24 345:14 348:20 350:12 President's 153:15 presses 77:15 pressure 100:16 presuming 152:12 pretend 177:1 pretty 21:18 72:5 78:5 80:17 82:7 110:16,17 135:24 190:16 244:3 266:17 315:6 351:22 prevention 139:11 323:5 343:4 previously 135:20 333:15 prework 269:15 Prez 90:21 prices 307:7 310:12 311:16 329:7 pride 219:23 224:17	primarily 60:5 62:12 primary 147:15,17 printed 93:23 Printer 319:19 prior 103:12,14 262:3 priorities 50:24 57:14 221:15 248:9 252:12,17 253:1 prioritization 51:3 196:20 prioritize 177:22 prioritizing 176:21 priority 176:20 178:11 252:23 prison 222:17 260:18 314:21 335:3,5 prisoners 260:19 prisons 314:6,17 private 168:15 173:20,21 303:24 350:3 privilege 217:10 259:17 privileged 217:1 Prize 315:10 proactive 143:18 144:10 212:2 proactively 143:12 probation 341:3,11 problem 162:4,9,12 173:2 211:8 237:24 274:5 300:20 302:4 320:9 problematic 112:1 problems 104:16 210:20 procedure 147:19 209:18 340:20,24 procedures 101:22 proceed 12:12 36:5 84:17 186:9	process 49:11 85:14 86:17 131:10,16 132:22 181:11 188:21 194:11 201:14,18 205:13 215:7 221:12 258:2 265:16 266:3,15 278:23 279:6,17 287:20 306:15,19 329:22 338:18 processes 195:1 Procreate 339:1 procured 96:2 produce 249:15 produced 282:17 producing 52:21 product 134:2,3 282:16 production 204:20 professional 178:19 338:20 professionally 150:15 program 45:19 50:14,15 56:12 59:14 67:11,21,24 68:15 103:24 113:12,14, 15,19 114:12,15,24 115:5 119:9 121:21 122:4,7 123:9 124:2,12 125:2 169:21 170:3 171:12,15, 19,23 176:15 185:2,12 186:14,19 187:1 197:6 203:21 204:9 206:11,13 207:4 208:16,21 209:5,6, 7 215:21 216:3,24 222:8 225:13,14,22 226:8 236:4,7 237:14 238:18 239:14 240:8,12,21 247:2,23 251:7,24 252:4, 5 256:7 257:11 261:13 264:17 268:11 269:21 272:12,14 273:10 285:22 302:20 313:18,20,23 314:9,12 315:21 317:21 320:17 321:23 323:22 332:20 333:11,24 334:4, 14 336:9 340:11,17 343:4
---	---	--

344:1 346:24 349:14 350:11 programming 224:16 284:9 317:19,24 programs 66:6 104:3 113:22 116:13,15 122:23 134:12 154:24 172:2 223:11 225:16 249:24 253:23 254:1,10,12 276:17 278:9 283:12 284:8,11 299:7 304:3 312:24 313:3 316:24 317:8 342:24 345:10 350:9 351:5 progress 57:3 62:2 69:6,8 82:10,15 83:10 145:20 187:20 241:2 progressing 307:3 project 77:2 185:7 199:9, 12 206:10,15,16 207:1, 21,23 208:4,7,11,23 228:12 236:5,9 239:7 258:5 262:1 265:17 268:2 276:20 279:10 280:5 289:5,19 290:10 291:1,10 292:6,22 296:9,19,23 297:3 300:13 308:3,23 309:16 311:11 329:14 projected 56:6 297:1 311:20 projecting 98:12 projections 98:9 projects 51:15 185:7,15 186:18 206:13,14 207:6 208:9,12,20 227:15 228:13 229:4 230:17 231:22 238:22 239:19 243:22 248:8 249:23 254:10,20 268:22 276:19 293:4 307:15,17,24 308:15 311:2,10,13 318:9 323:2 328:20 351:13 promise 306:3,8	promoting 26:2 63:14 pronounce 177:16 proof 253:22 properly 42:12 44:9 206:3 properties 128:19 130:12 131:9,12,23 133:4,15,17, 18,21 134:4 174:11 property 95:20 129:19 130:2 131:1 132:11 133:9 309:14 proposal 50:10 224:21 277:16 281:7 342:7 proposals 68:8 propose 207:24 proposed 49:21 50:9 52:11 107:9 255:16 283:6 310:8 proposes 253:10 proposing 76:22,23 protect 78:21 198:24 199:1 protecting 78:1 Protection 251:23 proud 94:15 117:9 247:20 252:9 275:9,22 314:19 315:9 321:7,8,9 340:10 proven 281:3 282:3 provide 15:20 33:17 73:17 84:18 109:7 115:15 117:14 118:14 122:19 167:10 171:13 213:7 219:7 222:3 246:7 254:22 299:6,8 313:23 320:11 provided 113:5 114:13 115:10 provider 117:10 providers 68:5,10 163:22 providing 117:21 121:13 122:17 146:2 221:23	PTC 133:6,12,18 public 19:4 25:12,24 32:23 33:4 34:18 38:10 48:19 50:17 55:14 60:13, 24 111:9 124:22 130:22 138:22 143:10 145:6,8 150:3 212:17 213:1 218:16 219:14 221:1,16, 21 223:6,20 227:15 229:3 233:19 246:8 251:15 262:12 275:17 288:5 289:3 293:14,23 294:15, 16 309:14 324:6 325:18, 24 327:4 public-facing 144:6 publicly 58:19 292:13 Pulitzer 315:10 pulls 302:8 pumps 345:6 punch 297:21 punchlist 296:16 punishment 241:19 purpose 19:19 purposely 291:13 pursue 63:3 pursuits 320:22 push 104:8 170:12 244:14 245:3 329:1 pushed 209:6 put 17:5 24:2 25:9 78:14 89:9 101:2 112:24 113:21 134:11 155:15 175:8 195:11 210:22 211:13 244:10 277:23 292:13 332:6 346:12,22 puts 123:12 237:19 putting 19:23 26:19 27:8 28:4,17 52:19 57:14 112:12 141:9 236:10
---	---	---

puzzle 253:21	Quetcy 137:13 146:16 160:8 285:24	rapid 148:2
		rapidly-changing 154:15
Q	quick 15:18 98:2 100:12 110:12 154:23 200:19 242:8 313:16 322:24 348:24 350:2	rate 60:23 62:18 64:12 65:2 114:17 185:24 273:21 297:2 310:8 313:24 320:3,4,6,7 328:5, 6 332:21 333:22 334:1
Quadplex 308:22	quicker 199:16	rates 54:8 331:14 347:14
quality 69:17 73:1 162:17 248:11 319:9	quickies 306:3	raw 99:13
quality-of-life 61:10 74:5 156:8 158:20	quickly 96:15 135:12 149:7 206:5 269:16,20 273:15 351:22	re-engage 68:9
quality-of-ride 70:5	quintessential 284:7	reach 62:18 64:15 84:22 154:2 248:21
qualms 167:3	quorum 41:10	reaching 71:1 269:6
quantify 332:12		reactors 327:24
quarter 53:8,23 78:24	R	read 234:18
quarters 99:17	radical 184:18	readily 147:23 149:5
Quest 230:22	radio 148:16 150:18	reading 14:11 42:3,18 43:9 44:1,16
question 15:18 16:10 26:21 27:14 32:18 34:2 64:6 70:17,24 98:4 106:19 120:2 121:19 133:16,20 139:7 147:13 161:4 163:7 168:22 171:24 187:17 193:15 198:11 263:9 265:14 268:19 274:17 277:10 278:13 295:16 296:7 301:16 304:15,22 306:24 307:13 324:13 325:9 327:9,14 328:12 330:16 332:3,11 342:23 346:21 348:23 351:1,7,9	rail 53:1 54:20 56:15 87:11 95:19 96:2,13 102:7 103:20 116:9 145:24 186:23 187:18 196:9,11 206:19	ready 28:8 55:2 84:16 95:2 96:9 106:17 108:17 109:5,8 193:9 232:16 326:8
questioning 46:16 48:13	railroad 70:21,22 133:8, 10	real 95:16 98:2,9 100:12 102:16 129:4 174:8 194:6 227:24 241:8 242:8 273:2 306:6 325:22 348:24
questions 14:15 16:19 26:12 29:13 35:3 36:20 37:3,8,19 58:15 59:10 89:2,19 90:11 92:23 98:3 120:2 126:1 137:7 139:16 147:4 156:2,4,10 180:7 190:20 197:20,22 207:19 246:24 248:5 261:12 274:24 276:8 300:10 301:14,15 313:16 314:14 323:1 350:24	rain 235:9 343:16	realities 160:20
	rainbows 235:10	reality 175:20,22
	raise 118:10 207:19 233:12 303:24	realize 177:24 184:6
	raised 14:6 91:24 168:22	realizing 172:4
	raising 118:12 212:21 321:13	rear 79:4
	rally 138:9	reason 60:16 70:23 83:1 111:12 143:9 164:4,9,10, 11,14 172:6 201:19 270:2
	ramping 159:3	reasonable 200:12
	ran 103:14 126:17	reasons 184:4 185:13 347:18
	ranging 341:15	rebounded 54:21
	ranked 167:8	
	ranks 62:7,13 63:17,20 157:22	

rebuild 222:21	recorded 200:4	regard 210:11
rebuilding 241:20,21,22	recover 105:17	region 51:23 55:5,9 86:22 122:14 169:13 170:19,22 190:5 272:22
rec 216:14 222:22 223:4 317:21 319:22 329:10 340:18	recovering 100:5	regional 52:4 53:1 54:20 96:13 102:7 103:20 110:1 116:9 145:24 196:9,11 206:19
receive 47:22 89:11 95:2 124:15 165:5 205:24 206:18	recovery 58:6 237:15 246:14	regionally 86:19
received 200:6 201:13 314:4	recreation 223:3,4	regrant 289:14
recent 53:11 110:15 209:2	recruiting 63:6 267:17	regular 153:18 176:13
recently 70:4 248:22 315:22 344:8 350:3	recruits 63:24	regulators 254:23
recess 214:23	rectify 196:2	regulatory 329:22
recidivism 320:6,7 332:20 334:1 335:2	recurring 55:24 210:20	rehab 236:15
recipients 113:11,18 114:11 120:19	redemption 70:2	rehabilitation 306:21 342:15
recognize 24:21 29:21,23 41:10 137:20 140:23 141:16,22 168:2 190:2,8 218:9	Redesign 180:10	reintroduce 208:20
recognizes 16:22 22:1 26:14 32:4 41:12,17 43:12 83:13 92:13 110:6 119:16 125:18 137:10 146:14 160:7 166:13 198:4 203:2 274:18 281:12 285:23 312:9 322:6 335:8 350:20	redirecting 51:13	relate 351:6
recognizing 141:15	reduce 295:22 310:15 328:6	related 13:13 191:19
recommend 81:22	reduced 54:6 56:7 81:10 98:23	relates 165:18 176:4 201:10 261:19
recommendation 42:1,15 43:7,22 44:13 45:6	reduces 172:13 173:6,9 174:20 308:18	relationship 124:18 161:18 162:20,23 163:4, 20
record 12:12 16:16 25:8 29:10 36:4 42:9 44:6 46:14 47:1 48:11 89:9 91:5 167:5 216:19 242:10 245:21 247:13 256:18 265:8 271:8 277:12,24 317:6 332:9 340:15 342:8	reducing 62:3 81:9 307:12 324:21	relationships 227:24 304:19
	reduction 53:17 140:7 310:21	relative 52:16 89:21
	Reed 258:22	release 200:8,13
	refer 206:12	released 55:20
	referenced 143:6 186:16	releasing 249:5
	referred 295:17	relevant 224:23
	referring 67:8	reliability 52:18 54:24 102:5
	refine 243:24	reliable 93:21 104:10 279:24
	reflect 82:9	reliance 56:22
	reflected 55:18 293:20	relies 180:18,24
	reflection 241:16	
	reflective 319:3	
	reflects 221:6	
	refreshing 141:7,21	

relieved 112:23	replacement 56:20 181:4 343:11	requires 142:22 168:7 334:6
rely 160:21 254:4 330:11, 14	replacements 181:5	rerouted 46:21
relying 262:12	report 74:13 140:24 141:16,23 151:6 162:10 192:6 193:7 202:11,12 314:8	research 133:3 243:16 294:18 295:10 324:19 326:22
remained 122:15	reported 41:23 42:13 43:5,21 44:11 45:4 167:17	researchers 325:13
remaining 180:15,16	reporting 210:19	reserve 151:22
remains 127:13	repository 327:17	reshape 229:18
remarks 217:2 219:1	represent 51:7 89:18 161:19 189:22 250:11 295:12	residencies 231:17
remediation 344:22	representation 23:9 318:15	residency 284:10
remediations 229:14	representative 59:3 319:24 326:12	residential 252:2
remember 18:2 61:3 67:3, 4 92:1 113:15 136:4 214:6 257:13 258:3,20 288:6,21 313:7 346:8	representatives 49:2	residents 34:14 50:19 151:13 172:9,11 190:1 209:11 219:12 220:7 223:21 224:14 226:9 229:10 231:23 266:1,5 288:19 307:8 317:2
remembered 220:19	representing 26:9 49:4	resides 67:12
reminded 241:7	represents 250:16,23 251:4,14,20	resilience 239:21
reminder 171:7	Republican 24:8 100:3	resistant 80:11
reminds 221:9	repurposing 89:22	resolution 36:13 38:1,12 43:14,19 44:9 45:3 116:1 318:6
remote 105:9	reputation 256:15	resolutions 35:16,19 44:16 45:9
remove 67:23 182:1	request 14:10 43:7 45:7 49:9 58:13 68:7 150:17 200:6,12 201:12 256:21 270:3 323:11	resonant 326:13
removed 191:20	requested 231:22	Resort 346:2,3
renewed 52:14	requesting 253:8	resources 57:9 65:20 66:5 70:3,9,11 112:9 121:9 211:1 280:8
renters 123:20	requests 84:8	respect 128:6 130:20 222:1 294:1
reopen 192:7 193:9	require 269:23 301:19	respectfully 14:9
reopened 192:17	required 14:3 343:7	respond 33:8 104:21 149:3
reorient 178:10	requirement 49:24	responded 69:9 162:11
repair 56:14 342:10,14 343:1,13,22 344:9	requirements 120:22	response 33:18 35:4 37:6,
repairs 56:21 101:10 137:4 250:16 252:6 309:23 351:3		
repeat 249:12		
repeatedly 211:4,14		
replace 51:20 181:2 298:1		
replaced 56:16 296:15 297:9		

10 38:3,19,22 39:1,4,23 41:6 43:1 44:24 79:13 89:20 90:11 148:2,19,20, 23 165:13 responsibility 67:23 340:7 responsible 66:22 119:3 responsibly 256:6 responsive 95:9 147:9,10 rest 27:7 297:12 300:7 309:22 restarting 273:9 restaurant 21:14 restaurants 21:11,13,15 29:2 restoration 232:2 301:19, 24 303:19 304:1 306:22 324:1 restorations 229:13 302:2 316:23 restorative 222:7,9 241:18 313:17 317:9 340:17 restriction 114:2 restrictions 117:20 118:8 120:15 restroom 111:15 136:13 restrooms 111:10,13,23 136:15 result 56:5 61:13 75:2 85:12 177:10 resulted 62:11 140:6 results 52:22 58:2 75:11 193:4 retail 129:23 130:6 retired 67:9 retirees 154:14 retract 79:1	Retrofit 251:6 retrofitted 251:16 return 100:20 249:1,24 255:14 282:2 299:15 returned 53:6 returning 63:4 222:17 223:12 313:19 333:9,11, 18 334:7 reveal 121:10 revenue 90:4,5,8 98:9,23 172:1,17 174:17,19 183:6 276:13 322:21 revenues 56:1 123:4 172:16 175:1 reverse 51:16 Revolution 47:11 180:9 RFP 69:2,9 139:11 Richardson 12:8 14:18 16:4,15 21:23 26:7 29:19 32:2 34:24 35:6,13 36:2, 8,23 37:8,12,18 38:5 40:1,3 41:8,16 42:8,24 43:3,18 44:5,23 45:2 83:15,20 87:21 88:10 89:6 197:12 Richardson's 126:4 richly 281:20 Ricky 290:24 ridden 130:19 ride 75:1,16,17 76:3 96:20 104:14 113:23,24 114:1,3 118:22 121:8 130:18 155:11 162:8 167:10 172:10,15,21 173:5 210:10 rider 53:11 172:20 173:4,9 riders 57:5 62:6 73:13 84:21 85:16 86:7 115:16 120:7 149:23 161:7 162:15 165:24 186:22	196:20 ridership 53:3,5 82:17 103:4,23 105:1,5,18 106:6 114:8 122:1 123:7 132:1 143:17 144:8 145:9 146:3 159:8 172:2,8 174:13 183:21 ridership-focused 104:2 rides 32:23 97:9 rideshare 105:15 120:5, 11,14 rideshares 120:16 riding 53:9 70:7 72:8 90:22 104:21 110:15 172:12 176:1 202:16 209:21 right-to-know 200:11 rights 74:23 174:15 rigor 320:11 risen 63:16 64:9 risk 236:6 301:22 rival 196:8 Riverview 236:16,18,24 237:5,8 238:4 road 279:14 315:20 341:23 roadmap 57:22 roadways 123:14 rob 12:2,19 14:20 16:10 27:13 30:3 72:23 277:11 robbery 260:24 robust 18:15 19:4 173:21 195:7 334:19 rode 175:23 role 146:24 roll 38:15 153:17 rolling 141:12 167:21 180:9 291:23 331:4
---	---	---

roof 343:10,11,17		Sauer 46:1,8,19 48:14,16
roofs 250:21 346:17,23	S	61:17 67:7,15,19 69:20
rooftops 311:7	S-A-U-E-R 48:16	76:4 78:12,18 83:23 85:2
room 71:19 184:22 227:18	Sabrina 277:10	87:24 88:11 92:9 93:4
313:6	sad 233:5	97:13,20 98:11 100:18
rooms 29:2	Sadiq 216:13 242:12	103:5 106:22 111:8
rooted 227:15	sadly 339:12	112:13 113:10 114:19
roots 88:17 234:21	safe 78:17 104:11 135:8	115:6,13 117:7 120:8
Rosario 162:21	145:14,15,20 150:11,16	122:11 124:17 125:15
rose 63:20	161:9,13 162:14 164:2	126:7 127:3 129:14 131:6
roughly 101:3 223:12	168:10 213:5	132:3 133:1,7 148:4
226:9 229:10	safely 107:19 213:3	150:5 152:10,24 156:14
round 98:20 119:12	safer 121:24 143:13	157:1,9 166:5 167:23
179:22 189:8 197:19,22	145:23 234:1 248:11	168:19 169:1 172:5 174:2
198:1 220:2 222:8 225:2	251:3	179:20 181:6 189:13
246:3 260:9	safest 252:14	191:23 194:13 197:9
route 87:10,11 127:21	safety 25:12,24 32:23	198:18 200:9 202:8
184:3,8 205:14 210:21	34:12,14,19 49:17 52:18	203:8,18 205:3 206:8
211:6	53:20 54:23 60:13 61:1,	208:10 209:4
routes 108:2 164:21	21,24 66:11 67:19 82:16	save 137:2 238:3 251:2
180:11,13,15,16 181:24	145:6 150:3 161:15 192:8	349:10
182:1,2,16 183:8,9,20,21	208:1 210:11 212:17	saved 252:5
184:1 210:15,23	213:1 221:16,21,22	saves 121:22 274:4
routine 237:7	223:20 325:18 327:4	savings 56:1 99:1 251:17
row 168:4	sake 18:3 98:20 180:4	297:5 308:11
rowing 158:6	313:16	scale 253:4,16 254:12,13
rows 346:5	Salam 265:4	269:21 331:11
Rue 83:17 136:5 198:5	salary 151:23 152:16	scenario 264:13
286:1 298:16	sales 249:16	scene 21:14 149:15
rules 14:10 20:19 42:2,16	saloon-style 76:7	Schapira 215:13 246:23
43:8,23 44:14 45:7	saluting 235:8	247:9,15,18 249:20
run 63:6 74:14 137:1	same- 263:3	268:17 271:11 274:13
174:24 192:12 349:13	same-day 225:18	278:12 296:6 297:18
running 61:14 103:13	Sanchez 234:16	307:20 312:6 328:11
111:2 140:2 271:2	Sanitation 319:17	342:21 346:20 349:12
runs 68:14 74:15 93:20	sat 160:24 326:19	schedule 108:24 188:14
199:18 264:16	satisfaction 167:18	scheduling 15:1
		scholarship 124:16
		scholarships 223:18
		school 91:2 116:7 117:2,
		10,16 118:2,11 170:4,9
		210:8 227:18,19 243:4

273:10 294:15,17 308:4 319:20 329:10 schools 251:16 257:23 289:11 scientist 144:21 scope 67:15,17 127:9 308:7 scores 167:19 Scott 46:1,6 48:10,16 64:7,21 83:22 92:19 146:22 seamless 47:14 season 100:3 160:24 161:1 276:9 seasons 107:16 seat 74:21 Seattle 275:13,15 seconded 42:6,12 44:3,9 seconds 42:10 44:7 sector 168:15 secure 50:1 57:7 securing 57:16 security 61:21,24 112:9 138:12 144:3 156:16 348:3 seemingly 299:3 sees 293:12 310:11 select 15:20 selection 15:23 self- 337:15 sell 170:18 329:4 selling 28:2 134:2 Semiquincentennial 55:6 Senate 60:4,5 100:3 174:6 Senator 81:23 82:1,5 Senators 82:6 145:12	send 89:10,16 136:19 sending 164:5 seniors 73:7 84:23 284:8 sense 129:13 131:4 224:18 228:15 260:20 sentences 334:16 sentiment 213:6 348:18 sentiments 145:5 175:16 261:18 separate 47:23 61:5 SEPTA 32:19 33:20 34:6 46:2 47:4,7,11 48:17 49:23 50:6 51:14,22 52:10,13,22 55:22 56:12 57:4,10 58:4 59:1,5,14,19 61:12 63:4,16 71:13,20 78:1,4,10 84:3 91:8 92:24 93:3,6,11,15 95:15 96:1 97:21 101:20 104:5,14 107:13 110:12,15,23 117:8,13,17,21 119:19,24 120:3 121:16 126:5,11 127:18,20 128:4,11 129:5,10,20 130:16,19,23 132:2 133:5,19 134:1,21 135:9 136:8,14,23 137:24 139:12 140:22 141:3 144:1,3,5 145:6 146:11 147:3,8,11 150:1 151:24 153:8 155:24 158:5 159:6,15,20,23 160:21, 22,23 161:11,21 164:6 165:1 166:4 167:7,13,17, 21 168:14,19 169:7,17 170:14 173:20 174:24 175:11,23 180:8 189:23 190:2,8,14,21 193:20 194:5 196:24 197:18 198:13,14 200:5 213:15 214:13 239:8 262:7 263:12 264:7 265:16 266:2 267:15 SEPTA's 19:2 48:22 49:2,	8 50:13 51:9,17 53:19 57:12 58:11 121:19 128:1 171:14 180:17,21,23 211:21 262:22 September 51:13 116:1 series 237:4 seriousness 213:12 serve 51:22 57:6,22 108:2 223:11 252:1 313:21 349:16 served 189:15,22 217:17 250:12 252:8 serves 15:14 114:15 227:12 service 13:3,9,20 15:17 49:17 51:4,16 55:16 81:6 85:5,10,17,21 93:21,22 100:22 103:14 104:6,10 105:24 106:5,7 107:23 108:1 109:8 120:6 121:12 127:9 128:11 129:24 146:1 180:3 182:2,3,5 183:4 192:13 194:1 195:5 196:8 203:13 217:11 233:7,24 251:23 305:21 341:21 services 35:15,22 36:11, 18 108:7 138:24 213:8,9 288:17 309:2,4 serving 349:15 session 42:4,19 43:10 44:2,17 45:9 232:15 sessions 61:3 set 248:21 298:2 sets 277:18 setting 237:7 settings 198:12 severity 194:7,16 sewage 279:17
--	--	---

Sewer 251:23	shortage 273:18	Silverliner 95:22 101:7 187:21
sexual 138:1	shortened 248:3	Silverliners 100:14,21 101:4 188:5
shameful 131:24	shorter 181:15 334:15	similar 14:2 63:17 146:3 262:21 338:8 345:17
shameless 19:24	shortest 181:19	simple 134:9 136:17 345:2
shape 223:23 225:9	shortly 149:16	simultaneously 79:8
shaped 219:19	shout 15:5,11	sing 232:5
Shapiro 47:20	shout- 242:3	singing 235:5
share 29:19 31:15 49:15 89:12 116:24 182:14 200:17 201:1,6,15 204:14 213:6 239:24 248:1,2 249:4 283:4 292:21 295:22 297:11 326:16	Shout-out 87:22	single 24:12 63:10 94:13 103:7 104:9 117:13 149:12 167:14 203:20 277:2 278:5 296:10 299:16 330:13
shared 50:20,24 121:7 175:18 219:14 224:15 234:6 261:18	show 21:6 24:3 29:5 81:23 82:8 94:2 95:15 102:5 104:20 108:23 182:9 183:5,14 232:12	sir 126:6 242:14 271:1 338:4,7
sharing 200:4 201:9 202:2	showcased 318:19	sit 150:24 162:12 197:4 326:16
shave 185:11	showed 53:11 240:24	site 33:22
shelters 191:20 195:17,20	showing 17:6 88:17 103:11 183:3,10 318:1,22	sitting 101:11 246:9
shield 78:15,22,24 79:4	shown 103:6 106:6 253:22	situation 165:21 194:7 196:2 209:16
shift 93:10 140:1 227:1 268:5 347:24	shows 53:23	situations 209:13
shifted 93:8	shrinking 62:16	size 156:24
shifts 226:10	shutoffs 347:20	skilled 55:1
shoes 259:15	shutting 229:24	skills 227:22 241:14 313:22 317:23 318:4 319:13 338:12 339:5
shoestring 167:1	side 90:4 212:20 240:4 247:10 279:14 334:12	skyrocket 312:3
shoot 102:10 104:18 179:16	side-by-side 150:24	slashed 250:14
shooting 162:6 187:8	Sidney 231:1	Slawson 223:5
shop 129:23	sign 161:10 238:17 293:15 294:10	slept 267:14
shops 338:24	signaled 135:4	slew 186:3
short 101:13 107:7 120:8 217:16	signed 20:6 263:19	slice 349:20
short-sightedness 178:21	significance 92:2	slider 192:21
short-term 325:5 332:13	significant 99:1 113:17 332:8	
	significantly 190:24	
	signs 140:23 295:7	
	silent 79:11,13 148:17	

sliver 303:20 323:23,24	293:16 308:17 309:17 315:6 329:16	specifically 126:12 141:5 156:15 172:22 181:24 214:13 278:3 314:5 344:1
slow 278:18 280:6	sorts 113:21 149:3 173:10 269:6 329:24 343:20	speed 105:23 212:3 244:18 254:18
slows 279:7	sought 256:8	spend 31:5 90:3 344:17
small 171:13 191:10 217:13 266:21 283:15 289:15 327:24 330:20	sounds 106:16 134:5	spending 29:3 45:17 74:8 185:23 344:11,14
small- 251:20	source 279:22 307:4	spent 74:12 127:14 140:12 192:19 290:19 300:5
smaller 130:1	sourced 310:23	spoke 132:5 335:19
smart 262:14	sources 186:6 254:6 330:3	spoken 88:2 123:22 167:22
smelled 110:18,20	South 71:23 72:4,15 109:22 126:14 127:12 311:23	spread 32:16
smoking 74:19 209:11 211:7,24 212:20	Southeastern 190:4	spruce 94:19
smooth 47:14	Southwest 190:3 191:10 203:16 259:1	spurred 249:22
snap 142:23	space 18:19 129:23 221:1 224:5,12 240:22 267:12 284:10 325:24	Squilla 38:18 231:7 298:18 335:9,10 350:21, 22
snowstorms 53:5	spaces 164:9 178:19 219:15 223:6 267:18 291:13	stability 52:16 255:8 299:9 304:18
soccer 107:9	spade 73:10	stabilize 51:16 165:20 254:11 255:13
social 138:23 260:4 348:3	speak 156:15 194:11 198:19 203:9,17 268:16 286:9 307:21 316:6,7 336:19	stabilized 154:1
socially 339:5	speaking 70:6 78:22 124:24 130:2 172:22 229:6 286:7	stable 57:17 154:6
solar 251:10 273:4 276:21 311:1,6 327:21 328:14,18 345:7,15,18,20,23 346:5, 13,16,23 347:4,7,12 348:5,14	speaks 287:1 304:11	staff 33:3 71:3 85:15 91:20 140:15 141:2,10, 13,21 148:6 157:3,6,11 162:23 202:4,8,19 218:5, 8 233:10 255:18 256:12 269:23 270:1 280:8 283:11 304:24
Solarize 253:24 346:24	special 20:1 24:22 35:15, 22 36:11,18 106:20 107:5 165:11 232:6 242:3 314:2	staffer 313:6
Solarized 250:21	specialists 68:12,20	staffing 54:15 64:8,11 112:2 176:10 254:11 269:14
solely 330:15	specific 81:16 86:21 111:10 118:1 142:12 201:19 210:21 211:6,10 306:12	stage 29:5
solution 52:2 57:8 93:9,13 163:14 184:13 185:17		stake 168:14
somebody's 135:16 150:8 315:11		
someone's 179:2 315:12		
something's 211:15		
Sonia 234:16		
sort 27:10 87:13 90:5 126:13 141:7,9 144:1 196:3 263:20 269:14 273:7 279:19 280:10		

stakeholder 88:22 stakeholders 205:10 256:20 286:23 stand 162:8 190:20 260:8 285:7 standard 101:21 147:18 201:14 209:17 standardizes 178:21 standing 63:19 Star 21:13 55:7 stars 179:16 187:9,10 232:12 235:2 start 109:3 126:2 141:12 161:4 181:8 185:8,22 204:20 205:19,21,22 208:13 209:5 217:4 221:20 222:4 263:11 275:1 288:3,10 302:10 322:11 329:16 333:3 started 46:17 58:18 69:10 105:5 122:12 181:11,21 190:18 193:6 227:9 236:13 243:16 268:20 312:22 315:19 335:23 starting 90:9 105:14 141:11 180:10 192:18 261:13 290:5 starts 87:19 109:6 state 12:11 36:4 46:13 47:5,8,19 48:10 59:3 168:15 169:10 186:6 192:8 198:16 216:18 229:6 242:9 243:11 245:20 247:12 308:12 314:21 332:9 341:7,23 state-of-good- 56:13 state-operating 50:3 stated 16:4 statement 285:6 States 251:10	statewide 50:9 52:6 stating 16:15 42:21 44:19 214:10 station 72:3 76:15,17 98:19 99:2,5 129:18,19, 20 135:18 136:10 165:22 174:15 177:13 186:22 204:6 207:22 208:7 226:8 238:13 267:4,6,12 station-by- 99:1 stations 54:9,14 76:14,20, 24 98:17 99:4,16 100:7 135:14,24 136:16 157:4 158:6,18 164:7,14 176:5 178:1 204:4 205:16 206:21 264:11 267:1,15 statistic 344:7 statistics 143:5 status 56:11 208:6 stay 218:20 237:16 245:11,12 247:6,8 334:18 347:17 steadfast 49:13 steady 280:6 Steele 319:20 stenographer 242:11 step 55:14 112:22 169:8 205:9 233:6 stepped 102:1 stepping 159:2 steps 304:17 steward 233:23 stewards 305:16 stewardship 57:19 stick 155:17 stop 64:17 72:5 76:1 86:7 142:5 152:1 153:10 178:3 184:9 203:6 236:6 280:23 316:13	stoppage 153:7 stopped 138:20 237:9 303:12 stops 85:15 190:8 204:4 210:2 262:9 266:9 267:8, 15 storage 328:17 stories 176:1 220:18 234:4 245:3 story 146:12 storytelling 241:2 straight 28:24 205:24 straighten 73:3 stranger 243:9 strangers 246:9 strategic 57:13 62:10 95:12 120:4 253:1 256:16 272:8 strategically 61:21 95:11 255:19 strategies 64:3 65:6 68:18 80:24 strategy 82:13,14 106:3 street 68:8 71:24 72:7 90:23 91:11 94:3 96:5 107:24 126:18,23 157:19 158:22 181:2 188:8 203:23 204:4,5,17 290:20 293:15 298:3 streetcar 204:11 streetcars 207:4 streetlight 276:20 296:8, 10 streetlighting 295:21 streetlights 251:1 streets 346:14 strengthened 56:4 219:23
---	---	---

stretch 112:8 303:22	submit 89:19 90:10 193:8	186:14 192:1 212:18
stretched 234:22	submitted 13:21 36:19	213:9 218:13,24 222:21
strictly 66:21	192:6 248:4	223:15 226:6 227:3
strike 151:16	subpoena 201:5	231:21 241:10 242:1
strikes 149:10 151:20	subsidize 311:10	253:16 254:22 256:19,23
strong 23:15 57:18	subsidizing 347:3	268:14 269:18 285:11
218:22 234:5 256:17	substitute 52:1	311:24 322:22
stronger 224:18 228:15	Suburban 226:7 238:13	supported 53:14 57:16
248:10	267:3,12	108:22 109:1 116:16
struck 262:5 263:14 299:2	subway 52:24 70:23	supporter 165:1 175:10
structural 56:6 301:16	73:21 136:4,8 158:15,18	313:10,11
344:24	subways 139:5 157:18	supporting 28:11 242:5
structurally 78:20	202:7	313:19 342:19
structure 14:2 68:18	success 54:12 62:11	supportive 29:10 213:13,
164:19	65:6,12 66:4,12 74:1	17 321:21
structured 222:20	140:9 254:1 256:18	supports 132:2 252:12
structures 295:23	277:19 314:8 346:19	surely 29:13
struggle 33:1,5	successful 225:16	surface 81:15 210:15
struggling 310:10	successfully 63:5 139:21	220:13
stucco 302:8	suggest 201:24	surpassed 297:1
student 115:23 116:2,4,8	suggesting 310:1	surprised 336:16
117:3 125:3	suggestion 154:23	surrounding 208:3
students 63:9 84:23	summarize 348:24	survey 53:11
116:6,10,11 117:4 118:21	summer 108:10 191:5	surveys 104:19,22
124:14,15 125:5 227:22	194:3 195:10,13,17	survival 175:4
228:2,5 251:15	239:12 262:3	Susan 223:5
studio 238:12	summoned 151:3,4	suspended 42:3,17 43:8,
studios 291:9	Sunday 165:6	24 44:15
study 295:18 326:6 329:9	Sunra 230:21	suspension 14:10 45:7
348:1	superior 318:7	suspicious 141:15
stuff 20:2 25:21 111:20	supervisor 151:2	sustainability 109:18
177:18 296:5 335:18	supervisors 157:12	304:20 310:15
stunned 326:20	supplemented 66:19	sustainable 52:1 57:7
stunning 231:12	support 12:23 13:14	sustaining 225:6
subject 120:21 200:10	24:20 32:12 36:12 49:16	switch 327:11
sublet 133:21	50:3,23 55:4 58:11,14	system 19:4 32:22 33:7
	60:8 73:17,18 83:2 107:6	48:4 49:19 53:10 55:3
		57:1 59:21 62:4 66:9

68:22 70:13 73:5 74:2 79:20 91:9 92:3 93:20 94:7,14 96:12,21 105:19 106:4 121:16 136:4,8,23 158:15 161:16 162:10 164:1,23 167:17 168:1,8 179:6 183:11,17 185:23 199:18 200:21 222:19 275:17 313:2 351:2 system-wide 98:14 99:9, 15 systematically 101:17 systemic 255:1 systems 98:16 194:9 243:4 342:10,14 343:1,3, 13,22 344:4,8 345:7	88:4 93:11 104:13 109:23 112:11,18 138:11 159:4 163:2 164:20 171:22 184:11 198:9 201:24 222:13 235:15 237:9 238:1 260:17 275:23 286:20,21,22 287:16 295:20 311:3 315:14 324:10 326:18 327:6 330:17,19 331:22 334:22 350:16 talked 25:10 60:3 61:5 68:3 93:5 156:7 171:20 173:23 224:21 246:15 278:9 288:6 324:14 327:21 345:18 351:10 talking 20:6,12,20 87:6,14 97:10,19 134:10 163:12 177:4 195:21 196:7,23 212:23 258:3 295:11 311:23 328:4 331:13 talks 294:2 Tanisha 212:19 target 86:21 100:19 Targeted 54:2 tasting 235:7 taught 241:14,15,16 tax 144:15 249:7 252:18 271:18 taxes 28:6 249:12,17 teach 241:12,13 339:1 teacher 273:12 teachers 294:16 teaching 237:7 318:3,4 team 46:15,20 48:12,24 59:1,5 61:4 65:23 69:13 81:16,17,22 83:23 84:9 91:19 95:9 102:24 140:2, 3 142:15,16 143:3 189:17 195:6 196:1 234:12 257:13,15,21,23 258:7	282:14 285:15 288:12,14 301:7,8 305:6,8 teams 132:18 158:17 257:17,23 298:23 300:18 302:22 tear 73:1 Tech 198:10 319:21 technical 254:22 technically 80:2 150:3 techniques 148:11 technology 57:20 76:1 139:23 199:8 271:17 teens 228:8 telling 88:14 144:10 146:11 147:1 245:3 Temple 123:22 temporary 51:24 55:10 93:9 191:19 tend 183:16 tenuous 56:11 tenure 217:21 term 277:8 304:20 320:21 326:6 Terminal 138:4 terms 26:23 30:4 31:11 60:21,23 75:24 82:16 140:10 145:24 156:3 176:15 213:16 261:8 332:18 349:2 test 206:3 testament 214:9 testified 246:2 testify 12:21 35:18 36:12 37:21 45:24 49:8 58:11 145:11 testimony 12:13 14:13 35:14 36:5,19 37:24 45:12,16 51:8 212:15
T		
T5 205:13,24 table 12:6 35:24 46:4 188:24 215:17 246:12 248:1 300:17 tabulated 324:16 Tacony 224:1,2,11 231:13 282:1,21 283:2,13,14,21, 23 284:6,13,14 285:8,18 tag 288:12 takes 55:13 62:17 99:11 115:7 119:7 159:24 160:1 171:10 199:20 209:12 214:18 241:5 246:10 269:15 293:16 taking 59:18 74:20 86:15 116:22 120:1 143:22 159:14 184:15 191:15 talent 340:3 talented 336:18 talents 264:9 talk 19:13 21:12 23:5,24 64:3 85:16 86:18,22 87:8		

216:20 217:8 219:8 235:22 245:17 246:8,23 248:3 319:4 335:13 350:18 testing 120:23 text 165:5 That'll 89:6 theme 171:1 therapy 246:15,16 314:6, 10 there'll 292:18 334:13 Theresa 68:14 thing 20:15 25:8 71:15 87:13 105:9 107:12 112:6 131:21 135:11 143:14 155:16 160:3 184:24 196:15,18 202:3 224:6 232:6 244:19 245:16 248:14 275:18 282:22 286:16 311:14,15 339:23 342:2 343:6 348:10 things 18:14,24 25:24 27:2 28:13,24 29:1 34:3 47:4,6 60:9 61:16 73:1 78:8 82:11 85:8 93:14,15 105:14,22 106:4 107:5, 13,20 111:4 116:18 134:19 141:1,14,17,22 143:16 144:8 153:20 154:16 155:1 157:12 159:13,17 165:23 167:2 173:12 174:16,23 179:14 180:5 187:6 190:20 205:22 210:18 211:24 213:14 217:3 224:7 245:7 273:3 275:15 278:18 279:7 280:10 283:11 286:18 289:1 293:22 299:4,24 304:3 310:13 318:7 330:1 thinking 158:4 227:23 299:24 305:2 320:20	Thomas 40:5,6 thought 124:12 187:1 204:24 240:4 260:24 303:3 316:13 323:13 326:23 thoughtful 49:13 252:20 thoughts 106:21 thousand 302:3 thousands 77:17 284:20 threads 231:15 threat 152:8 threatened 128:10 threatens 130:17 three- 78:23 99:16 three-year 272:16 thrill 288:12 thrilled 282:16 315:3 thrive 233:22 Thursday 290:5 ticket 135:2,5 tickets 134:24 tier 175:12 tighten 175:8 time 14:16 17:3 18:19 23:19 24:12 48:8 57:9 62:6,17 63:10,13 65:3 74:8,11 81:3 89:20 91:22 93:1 95:3 100:24 101:11 102:2 110:5,15 118:16 130:11 132:4 138:5 139:20 140:12,17 149:12 153:9 154:5 164:12 168:1 179:19 180:4 181:15,20 192:20 199:20 204:15 205:11 212:14 214:3 217:13 227:1 230:14 247:4 249:5 256:24 258:4 262:4 263:15 273:16,20, 24 287:13 296:20 300:23	302:11 308:7 313:17 318:3 327:7 338:23 345:17 349:8 351:5,16 timeline 89:23 191:17 307:22 times 78:6 117:5 120:12 135:15 142:14 156:7 162:2 175:7 182:23 218:17 273:23 302:16 timetable 93:24 94:1 tinker 105:14 Tioga 165:21 266:6 267:7 TLC 102:16 TNCS 105:16 121:14 today 12:19 19:2,3 38:7 48:22 49:15 52:22 55:14 58:11 64:4 68:9 70:6 71:3 72:18 85:3 87:17 98:8 102:21 166:21 171:20 174:9 182:7,16 183:5 184:19 186:1 198:22 215:22 216:17 219:7 232:6 240:20 247:21 248:1,5 249:4 256:24 276:10 310:6 319:4 today's 14:9 toes 328:13 toilets 111:19 told 96:17 118:1 204:10 236:20 Tomesco 236:7 Tomesko 290:9 Tommy 335:24 tomorrow 290:5 tons 319:8 tool 144:7 199:14 tools 65:12,19 66:13 198:13
--	--	--

top 27:16 62:18 167:20 175:11 176:20 252:23 331:12 346:17 top-tier 177:23 topic 141:18 228:17 torrential 177:9 total 61:12 129:9 203:22 250:2 253:8 254:5 touch 61:15 touched 296:9 touches 141:2 tough 187:4 tourism 30:5 31:6 tourists 191:9 262:11 tours 289:21 292:17,18 town 23:23 34:5 87:16 towns 177:15 track 206:23 256:17 296:13 tracking 143:19,21 tracks 262:9 trading 272:24 trafficking 139:10 140:11, 24 141:17 323:5 train 71:7,9 72:2 74:7,9,14 75:23 76:3 94:5 102:8 138:2,10 147:16,20 148:5 155:3,12 161:23 162:1 177:12 196:17 202:7,17 213:3 229:24 271:4 trained 138:23 148:7,8 202:4 training 101:23 116:14 140:14,20 141:10,13 142:7 223:13 237:12 239:14 251:7 271:3 272:10 273:14 299:7 313:22 329:2 348:11	trainings 146:4 trains 54:17 70:3 74:12,16 82:19 102:11 139:5,23 140:2,4 162:7 177:17 202:6 transactions 174:9 transfer 180:20 transform 258:7 264:11 299:10 transformation 299:12 transformational 263:21 326:1 transformed 129:22 260:1 301:2 transforming 286:14 transit 32:22 33:7 47:8 48:23 49:14 50:9 52:6 53:15 54:5,15,16 59:21 60:9 62:15,19 63:2 64:1 71:19 73:5,13 83:11 92:3 99:20 118:22,23 122:18 123:13 149:13 150:24 161:7 162:13 164:1 167:9,17 168:8 169:12 170:20 171:2,5,16 173:17 174:7,12 178:17 179:6 211:2 262:8,12 275:17 transition 55:18 68:2 69:1 transitioned 69:21 translate 75:7 98:8 translates 334:23 transpire 209:3 transport 119:1 138:23 transportation 19:4 30:22 32:11 33:4 48:3,19 50:18 81:6 83:16 90:16 92:15 109:17 117:9,22 121:22 130:22 140:13 164:23 210:15 214:12 trapped 80:2	trash 296:13 traveled 23:7,10 traveling 293:2 Treasurer 12:4,20 14:21 treatment 66:6 165:12 279:17 treats 344:9 tremendous 62:2 76:19 99:9 100:15 triangles 265:21 290:12 tribute 230:20,24 232:10 trigger 79:12 148:19 200:13 trip 181:17,18 184:2 triple 182:20,22 trips 52:24 trolley 51:2 54:20 105:21 167:24 190:18,22 191:2,7 192:4,13,17,22 193:21 194:2 195:9,10,22 196:6, 15,16 199:5 203:10,14,19 205:15 trolleys 81:1 95:21 202:6 true 114:5,6 289:17 trust 144:23 171:9 241:21 trust-building 220:16 truth 117:24 124:23 175:21 tunnel 190:18,22 191:8,18 192:7,11,14,17,23 193:9 195:22 196:6 206:21 turn 64:2 70:18 74:3 122:19 150:12 174:12,20 253:12 257:3 264:14 317:3 turns 326:2 turnstile 75:20,23 77:5
---	--	---

visible 220:11 229:19 vision 57:10 93:3,18 95:14 97:5 179:2,15 187:8 220:9 221:14,15 visit 33:13,23 111:21 225:24 322:18 visited 285:18 346:11 visitors 94:16 95:6 191:6 220:7 282:11 visualization 285:2 vocabulary 338:12 voice 228:2 244:1,11 voices 220:9,24 Voight 215:24 216:1,4 235:24 236:1 volume 329:7 volumes 287:2 vulnerable 62:5 68:21 317:2	Walnut 72:7 wand 283:19 wanted 14:23 15:11,19 24:23 30:2 84:12 86:2 89:8 90:12 91:18 92:22 93:9 107:12 112:17 125:24 126:2,9,11 134:20 137:21 138:14 139:12 142:2 193:19 198:9 203:9 212:9 217:2,12 234:18 242:17 257:14,16 275:1 278:3,11 289:4 300:24 328:8 337:2 339:13 350:24 warmly 281:19 warrior's 235:4 wasting 280:1 watch 211:2 275:4 watching 140:4 water 177:11,20 251:22 279:10,14 280:3 329:15 ways 96:6 105:19 112:1 172:21 209:24 227:6 252:20 269:22 293:20 299:20 322:16 327:16 329:17 330:7 WBES 296:24 wealth 250:13 weapons 199:8 wearing 175:7 weatherization 349:3,13, 19 350:10 weatherize 349:9 Wednesday 165:7 weed 212:20 week 55:20 74:14 105:11 117:5 141:12 182:19 290:19 291:24 weekdays 116:5	weekend 22:10 110:16 116:23 weekends 116:3,21 weekly 74:13 162:24 163:11 weeks 193:7 281:18 300:5 weight 74:4 280:19 welcomed 281:19 welcoming 32:24 223:9 well-informed 89:1 well-received 80:18 well-represented 22:19 well-respected 25:22 well-trained 94:8 Weller 36:16 wellness 236:17 238:23 314:6 316:17 325:18 Wendy 46:18,20 58:20 84:4 89:12 137:20 164:5 165:5 175:19 189:14 213:13 West 124:3 128:22 131:3 190:3 191:9 203:15 wheel 99:8 174:24 Whip 275:12 whistle 177:19 White 68:14 who've 222:18 wife 159:24 213:2,4 wildest 242:24 Williams 158:1 212:7 230:13 willingness 287:7 Wilson 15:6 36:16 win-win 311:13 winding 184:3
W		
Wa 265:3 wages 226:12 wait 153:17 212:2,4 278:15 waiting 46:20 85:17 348:3 waitlist 268:15 269:1,2 wake 222:15 walk 221:4 228:22 walkable 18:23,24 walking 213:23 238:12 294:9 wall 220:12 229:23 232:23 234:23 293:16 323:18 326:2 walls 177:12 234:21 241:1 267:7		

window 79:6,23 80:7	249:10 252:11 253:3,5,17	341:23
winter 53:5 235:4	254:13 255:10 256:2	works 141:3 251:12
wintertime 349:4	257:7,18 259:6,18	272:17 321:24
wire 192:22,24 199:7	260:15,17 261:7 263:12	workshop 237:4
206:17	267:24 273:1,3 274:8	workshops 224:15 349:2
wisdom 218:13	275:5 280:16 281:3	world 55:5 106:13 154:16
wisest 284:16	282:13,16 286:5,6,13	173:16 220:1 262:18
wishes 37:23	287:7,19 289:7,8,9,10,15	282:12 323:16
witnesses 12:5 16:21	290:7,9 294:18 298:11,24	world- 262:14
35:3 37:20 38:6 46:3	299:22 305:13 308:19	world-class 25:13 168:7,8
215:16	309:18 310:19 313:18	175:13 178:3 284:2
woman 68:14	316:16 318:10,14,17,19	worldwide 321:6 322:14
Women 138:8	321:9,24 324:4,15 325:7,	worry 210:10
won 315:10	15 326:13 327:1,13	worse 186:12
wondered 325:4	330:16 331:5,18,19	worth 101:6 282:8
wonderful 18:9 26:19	332:7,12 333:12 334:17	wound 131:11 243:7
218:4,23 227:6 235:14	335:16 338:19,24 341:20	wrap 179:22 203:5 348:21
282:22 285:9 293:22	343:13 345:10,13 346:18	wraparound 213:9
298:23 300:15 324:4	351:22	wrapping 189:7 207:14
woo 23:12	worked 62:15 80:18 212:6	312:11
word 23:11 143:22 144:22	238:19 239:19 256:14	write 218:23 234:16
211:3	264:2 267:3 315:5 336:2,	writers 336:7
words 181:16	23	writing 248:4
work 15:6 16:17 24:24	worker 59:5	written 33:18 36:19 89:20
26:4 33:4 35:9 47:2 52:3	workers 78:2 151:24	90:11
57:6 58:8,21 59:2,11,13,	176:9	wrong 73:15 135:23 167:2
24 65:4 71:2,5 81:17	workflow 142:20	wrote 234:18
83:24 84:13 86:19 90:13,	workforce 49:18 55:1	
19 91:17 105:9 116:12	57:16 94:8 101:24 222:7	
128:1,6 130:20 137:19	225:7 332:4	X
140:7,19 144:18 151:17,	working 32:22 34:11	
24 153:7,10 157:24	36:24 47:19 54:22 80:14	Xfinity 19:11
158:11 166:23 168:3,12	84:20,23 90:14 103:1	
190:1 198:23 199:10	106:14,23 107:4 122:2	Y
205:20 206:20,23 207:6	140:12 141:6 147:5 163:4	
214:19 218:6,12,18	205:6 213:24 223:6	
220:21 222:20 223:1,7,16	225:19 228:11 231:13	y'all 66:16 166:24 212:23
225:14,18 226:13 227:19	236:5,13,24 237:20	Yale 326:5
228:2 230:11 232:3	238:13 240:7 257:24	Yard 328:15 330:7
233:9,12,18,24 235:15	263:17 264:6 274:9 279:9	
236:21 237:13 248:24	280:4 283:8 287:20	
	307:10 315:11,19 317:14,	
	15 318:8,24 319:4 325:24	
	327:22 329:14 330:4	
	332:19 338:22 339:24	

yay 110:12 221:1 223:14
227:15 229:7 233:1

year 19:21 45:13,18,21
47:17 48:1 49:10 51:9
53:8,23 54:1,7 55:9,15,17
56:8,9 57:4 58:12 63:7
65:23 66:2 68:3 76:23
77:4 81:3,10 85:9 88:13
90:2 93:5 99:12 103:9
113:1,8 115:24 117:5
122:9 128:11 129:7,8
139:14 141:5 146:10
152:5,11,13 153:13
167:19 169:14 170:17
171:3,5 173:3 174:1,6
180:19 185:8,9 187:1
194:4 199:9 204:13
205:21 208:14,16 209:6
219:8 223:10 224:21,24
226:10,19 227:11 228:8
229:2 230:15 248:16
256:23 257:12 262:16
269:19 276:9 277:2,14
278:5,15,16 279:2,3
280:24 281:6 283:7
292:18 299:16 300:12
309:8 314:3 315:18
320:24 333:7 335:19
336:7 340:16 349:16
351:20

year's 113:7 208:16

year-over-year 53:3

years 29:7 51:18 56:19
57:23 62:3,14 64:9,11
65:1 84:12 95:18 96:7
103:7 105:5 108:19
120:13 122:10 128:23
129:11 134:5 139:24
140:11,18 152:6 153:6,11
154:6 163:3 177:7 181:1,
12 184:19 186:12 187:3
188:1,10 189:16 204:16
207:24 217:9 236:3
238:19 247:24 249:15
250:9 256:13 257:9
271:14 280:5 297:4

300:5,6 302:13 303:7
305:1 310:5,18 312:23
325:19 335:24 343:16
347:5 348:2,18

yo 345:20

York 75:16 91:8,12 92:6
96:23,24 97:1,2 177:1,8

young 39:3 209:14 221:23
227:8,12,16 242:9,15
245:9 246:2 259:4 273:21
274:7 316:1,11 332:5
340:6,8 341:14 346:12

youth 228:10

Z

Zohran 97:8,14,15

zone 239:18