



THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN

**BOROUGH PRESIDENT GALE A. BREWER  
TESTIMONY ON INTRO 216-2014, GIVE TO THE NEW YORK  
CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION  
OCTOBER 29, 2014**

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Thank you, Chair Rodriguez, for the opportunity to testify today in support of Intro 216 of 2014, a bill I introduced along with City Council Member Levine to expand the City's Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS) program. The APS program provides an extremely important safety feature for pedestrians who are blind or have limited vision. Installed at street intersections and designed to work in concert with pedestrian walk signals, an APS device operates at the push of button and emits vibrations and audible signals designed to inform a blind or vision-impaired person that the "walk" signal has turned green. Research has shown that APS technology improves the ability of the blind to assess whether they can cross a street safely.

Previous legislation, Local Law 21 of 2012, which I sponsored and helped to pass, requires the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) to install 25 APS signals each year. So far, DOT has been meeting this goal. The agency installed 28 APS devices in 2012, and 26 in 2013 throughout the city; of these, 26 are in Manhattan. However, given the proven effectiveness of APS, we should take the next step and expand the program. In Manhattan, we now have a total of 26 intersections with APS.

Intro 216 add on to the impact of Local Law 21 by requiring DOT to install at least 100 APS devices at intersections where the agency has plans to construct (1) Exclusive Pedestrian Signals (EPS), which briefly stops all traffic at an intersection to allow pedestrians to cross the street in any direction; (2) Leading Pedestrian Intervals (LPI), which gives a "walk" signal to pedestrians before drivers get a green light to provide more crossing times; and (3) Protected bicycle lanes, which are separated from motor traffic by a parking lane or concrete barriers. This law would also require DOT to install at least 50 APS at intersections where these three street features were constructed before the effective date of this proposed law.

Installing APS at intersections with these features will go a long way towards helping pedestrian with vision impairment safely cross the street. EPS and LPI both provide pedestrians with lead time to cross the street more safely. However, they can also be confusing for someone with impaired vision. Similarly, protected bike lanes improve bike safety but alter the layout of many intersections and make them unfamiliar to those whose vision is impaired. Paradoxically, they can imperil people with vision impairments if they are installed without APS technology.



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Currently, very few intersections with EPS, LPI, and protected bike lanes include an APS device. According to the DOT website, there are 163 EPS signals operating in Manhattan, but none of these currently include an APS. Similarly, 145 LPI signals are currently operating in Manhattan, but only two sites have an APS; both are on 23<sup>rd</sup> street, one at 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue and the other at 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue. Only two APS sites have been installed at intersections with protected bike lanes, including 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Avenues. Intro 216 would help dramatically increase the presence of APS devices at intersections with EPS, LPI, and/or a protected bike lane.

Installing APS wherever EPS, LPI, and protected bike lanes exist would also help ensure a more uniform distribution of APS devices. To date, most of them are being installed at Manhattan's busiest intersections, and even in Manhattan only one has been installed above West 65<sup>th</sup> street. People who are blind and visually challenged travel all of our streets, after all, not just the most crowded intersections.

This bill has the support of many transportation advocates, including Transportation Alternatives, as well as advocates for those with vision impairments, such as the Lighthouse Guild. In fact, this bill originated from a Vision Zero Task Force Legislative Breakfast hosted by our office. It is a commonsense piece of legislation that will ensure our city's Vision Zero initiative is designed to benefit everyone who uses our streets.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I look forward to working closely with the Committee and the Council leadership to help ensure the passage of Intro 216.