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**Gale A. Brewer, Borough President**

## **Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer to the New York City Council Committee on Transportation, in favor of Intro 219 & the Creation of the Bicycle Safety Task Force December 2, 2015**

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I would like to extend my gratitude to Chair Rodriguez and the Committee on Transportation for allowing me to speak today in favor of Intro 219, which would create the Bicycle Safety Taskforce. I would also like to thank my co-sponsor, Council Member Mendez, for working with me on the creation of this taskforce, so that we can give the matter of bicycle safety the attention it deserves.

According to the Department of Transportation (DOT) surveys, bike ridership in New York City has steadily increased in recent years, from about 10,000 weekday riders in 2006, to over 15,000 riders counted in 2013. This increase, of course, has been the direct result of the efforts of two mayoral administrations, the City Council, bicycling advocates like Transportation Alternatives, and many others.

Working together, we have created more than 250 miles of new bike lanes in the five boroughs, many of those separated from traffic in dedicated or protected lanes. And with each new mile of bike lane, we've added more bikers to our roads—helping improve the environment and health of our residents while also reducing congestion on our overburdened roads, subways and buses.

Yet while bike ridership is at an all-time high, so too are fatalities caused by collisions; 20 bikers were killed in 2014, a disheartening increase from 12 who lost their lives a year earlier. When we include bike rider injuries due to traffic collisions, the grim total has fluctuated between 300 and 400 annually for the past decade. These numbers compel us to act, and as more people choose to bike as a primary mode of transportation, we as a city must do all we can to ensure their safety.

The increase in bike ridership also poses safety concerns for pedestrians, motorists, and other bicyclists. My office fields nearly daily complaints, many from seniors, who experience near misses with bikers, many of who are breaking the law in some fashion—by biking the wrong way, for instance, or operating a motorized “e-bike,” which is prohibited. While the safety threat posed by bikers pales in comparison to that posed by motorists, this type of reckless behavior by some bikers led to the death of four pedestrians last year. This is four deaths too many, and I believe these deaths are preventable.

With these factors in mind I have joined Council Member Rosie Mendez to call for the creation of the Bike Safety Task Force. It would consist of officials from DOT, the department of city planning, and the parks department, as well as 2 mayoral-appointed seats of a transportation expert and a bicycling advocate. This task force would hold no fewer than 10 public hearings in a two year period, to be hosted in every borough .

A full review of bicycle use across the city, including specific details about routes, pathways, and bike lanes will be completed by the task force, and lead to recommendations on how to best improve safety for bikers and pedestrians. In an era when we've been fighting to achieve a vision-zero city, this basic research is essential.

I would also like to speak in favor of intro 696, also before the committee today, which was put forward by Chair Rodriguez. The bill specifies that DOT compile and report information regarding bike-related fatalities in the city on roadways and parks. This bill is being proposed in the same spirit as the Bike Safety Task Force—to gather data on cycling which will help us better understand the safety needs of cyclists.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify this morning. I look forward to working with the members of this committee to help support and implement these initiatives.