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EMPIRE STATE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

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PENNSYLVANIA STATION AREA
GENERAL PROJECT PLAN AND DRAFT EIS
VIRTUAL ZOOM PUBLIC HEARING

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December 8, 2021

5:00 P.M.

B E F O R E

CELESTE FRYE,
The Hearing Officer

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Celeste Frye

Public Works Partners 8

Holly Leicht - ESD

Executive Vice President Real Estate

Development and Planning 12

Connor Lacefield - AKRF

Lead Consultant 24

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P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2
3 THE HEARING OFFICER: Hey. Good
4 afternoon, everyone. My name is Celeste Frye. I'm
5 the hearing officer and we're just giving -- we have
6 many people who are currently joining the meeting
7 via Zoom, so we are just giving people one or two
8 minutes to be able to enter the Zoom room and then
9 we'll begin.

10 All right. Good afternoon,
11 everyone. We have participants who are joining us
12 now. We will begin in one more minute.

13 All right. We will now begin our
14 public hearing. Welcome. Good afternoon and
15 welcome to the General Project Plan and Draft
16 Environmental Impact Statement public hearing for
17 the proposed Penn Station Area Redevelopment Project
18 formally known as Empire Station Complex.

19 My name is Celeste Frye with
20 Public Works Partners and I have been asked by the
21 New York State Urban Development Corporation doing
22 this as Empire State Development, or ESD, to conduct
23 this virtual public hearing pursuant to Section 16
24 of the New York State Urban Development Corporation
25 Act, the UDC Act, and article 8 of the New York

1 State Environmental Conservation Law and its
2 implementing regulations. I will be your hearing
3 officer this evening.

4 Today's hearing is being held
5 pursuant to a legal notice published in accordance
6 with the UDC Act and the State Environmental Quality
7 Review Act, or SEQRA, in the November 8, 2021
8 edition of the New York Daily News. The purpose of
9 this hearing is to afford you an opportunity to make
10 statements and comments about the draft General
11 Project Plan, Draft Environmental Impact Statement
12 and proposed revisions to the plan.

13 My purpose is to run tonight's
14 hearing in a fair and impartial manner and to try to
15 ensure that everyone who wishes to speak has an
16 adequate opportunity to be heard. This evening's
17 event is a hearing. It is not a question and answer
18 session. It is an opportunity for you to present
19 your views so that ESD can consider them in making
20 its final determinations.

21 Please note that this hearing is
22 being recorded. A stenographic transcript is also
23 being made and the transcript will be available on
24 ESD's website.

25 I would like to give some guidance

1 to help you fully participate in this hearing before
2 we formally begin the proceedings. We are requiring
3 this evening that only presenters share their video
4 during this hearing. For the best viewing
5 experience, we recommend that all participants
6 enable the feature in Zoom that allows you to show
7 only the participants with their video enabled.

8 These first two screens that we'll
9 show next provide instructions on how to do that.
10 First for a PC or android device and then the second
11 for a Mac or Apple device.

12 This screen showing now is for
13 those who wish to view the hearing with American
14 Sign Language interpretation.

15 The screen showing now explains
16 the options that you have for providing comments on
17 the General Project Plan, or GPP, Draft
18 Environmental Impact Statement, or Draft EIS, and
19 ESD's proposed revision to the plan.

20 If you signed up to speak before
21 the hearing during the registration process, we have
22 your name and you will be called during the
23 testimony portion of this hearing. We'll make a
24 list in the order in which people registered. If
25 you did not sign up to speak before the start of the

1 hearing but you would like to speak this evening,
2 please identify yourself using the raise hand
3 function on Zoom. Instructions for this are being
4 shown on your screen right now and will be shown
5 periodically throughout the hearing.

6 If you are joining us this evening
7 by phone only, you may dial *9 on your keypad to
8 indicate your desire to provide verbal testimony. if
9 you dial *9, we will receive a message with your
10 phone number. Participants using the raise hand
11 function or *9 will be added to the end of the
12 speaker list. We may, once we've recorded your
13 name, lower your hand. The host may lower your hand
14 once we've recorded your name.

15 The option to sign up to speak
16 this evening will end 30 minutes before the close of
17 the hearing at 7:30 p.m. The close of the hearing
18 is at 8:00. I will give you a minute to read the
19 instructions before I move on. Again, these
20 instructions will appear periodically during the
21 meeting.

22 Comments presented at this hearing
23 will be taken into consideration by ESD as part of
24 the final review of the proposed project. You will
25 also have the opportunity to send in your comments

1 via email or via USPS mail at the addresses provided
2 on your screen now. For those on the phone, the
3 email address for submitting comments is
4 pennstationarea@esd.ny.gov. That's
5 pennstationarea@esd.ny.gov or the original email
6 address for the project empirestation@esd.ny.gov.

7 Comments via email and U.S. mail
8 will be accepted until 5:00 p.m. on January 10th,
9 2022. This information is also available on ESD's
10 website and in the notice of completion for the
11 Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

12 Before we begin the testimony
13 portion of this hearing -- of this meeting to hear
14 your comments, we will hear from Holly Leicht of
15 ESD, the lead agency for the proposed project, and
16 then from Connor Lacefield of AKRF, the lead
17 consultant supporting ESD in the preparation of the
18 proposed project's Environmental Impact Statement or
19 EIS.

20 In addition to Holly Leicht, a
21 member of other representatives from ESD from the
22 project team are with us including:

23 Rachel Shatz, Vice President for
24 Planning and Environmental Review;

25 Marion Phillips, Senior Vice

1 President of Community Relations;

2 Angel Santana, Director of
3 Community Relations;

4 Gabriella Green, Vice President of
5 Real Estate Development and Planning;

6 Terrance Cho, Finance Director;
7 Richard Dorado, Senior Counsel;
8 And Anthony Semancik, Special
9 Counsel.

10 Before we begin the comment
11 portion of today's session, I would like to
12 introduce Holly Leicht of ESD who will provide a
13 brief summary of the proposed project, the GPP and
14 ESD staff's proposed revisions to the plan.

15 Holly.

16 MS. LEICHT: Sorry. Can you hear
17 me? I'm not sure if I'm muted.

18 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes, Holly,
19 we can hear you.

20 MS. LEICHT: Okay. Good. As Celeste
21 mentioned, I will be providing a summary description
22 of the proposed project and ESD's process and
23 schedule.

24 The first slide provides an
25 overview of the anticipated schedule for completing

1 the GPP and environmental review process. On
2 February 18th of this year, the ESD Board of
3 Directors certified the DEIS and adopted for public
4 review and comment, the draft General Project Plan
5 for the project.

6 In accordance with Section 16 of
7 the UDC Act, during the period since that milestone,
8 ESD has worked closely with and consulted the
9 project's Community Advisory Committee and its
10 larger working groups including local elected
11 officials and community stakeholders.

12 After considering their comments
13 and recommendations as well as feedback from
14 multiple public forums, ESD staff has responded with
15 proposed revisions to the plan for the project,
16 which I'll summarize shortly. ESD will review and
17 prepare written responses to the substantive
18 comments collected here today and throughout the
19 comment period that will close on January 10th,
20 2022. The compiled comments and responses will be
21 presented as part of the final Environmental Impact
22 Statement expected to be released in spring of next
23 year.

24 Based on this additional public
25 input, further changes to the GPP and EIS may be

1 proposed for consideration and action by the ESD
2 Directors. Agency actions on the proposed project
3 cannot be undertaken until the GPP and EIS are
4 completed and are available to inform the Directors'
5 decision making.

6 As noted earlier, the purpose of
7 today's public hearing is to hear your comments on
8 the draft GPP, the draft EIS and the proposed
9 revision to the plan for the project. This is not a
10 Q and A session nor a hearing about anything beyond
11 the scope of the draft GPP, DEIS and proposed
12 revision.

13 If you're viewing us on your
14 computer or via the Zoom app, you'll see my slide
15 presentation on your screen now as I speak. If
16 you're joining by phone only, you may access the
17 presentation on ESD's website following today's
18 hearing.

19 The proposed project is a
20 comprehensive plan to revitalize the area around
21 Penn Station and help fund significant transit and
22 public realm improvements. The area of the proposed
23 project is generally bounded by 6th And 9th Avenue
24 to the east and west and by West 30th and West 34th
25 Street to the south and north in Midtown Manhattan,

1 Community Districts 4 and 5.

2 The project area includes all or
3 portions of nine Manhattan tax blocks and
4 encompasses Penn Station, Madison Square Garden and
5 Moynihan Train Hall, though no new buildings would
6 be constructed on those three locations.

7 The proposed project would address
8 substandard and sanitary conditions, as those terms
9 are defined in the UDC Act, by facilitating
10 sustainable, transit-oriented redevelopment or eight
11 sites to create and more pedestrian-oriented,
12 mixed-use district. In addition, it would introduce
13 much needed public transportation improvements
14 including new entrances and access to Penn Station
15 and four nearby subway stations and public realm
16 improvements to address open space and pedestrian,
17 bicycle and vehicular circulation and to enhance the
18 streetscape.

19 The General Project Plan, or GPP,
20 for the Penn Station Area Redevelopment Project
21 would, among other things, authorize ESD to override
22 the New York City Zoning Resolution and other local
23 laws, as applicable, in accordance with the UDC Act.

24 Three of the eight proposed sites
25 -- shown as sites one, two and three on this slide

1 -- would accommodate the potential expansion of Penn
2 Station into the blocks south of the existing
3 station to allow for the creation of new,
4 below-grade tracks and platforms to increase the
5 station's capacity. The design, construction, and
6 operation of an expanded Penn Station is being
7 analyzed by the MTA, Amtrak and New Jersey Transit
8 as part of a separate planning and federal
9 environmental review process.

10 It is important to emphasize that
11 the redevelopment of sites one, two and three would
12 only occur if these blocks are selected as the
13 preferred alternative for Penn Station's expansion
14 through this separate planning and environmental
15 review process and the final GPP for the Proposed
16 Project would not authorize commencement of
17 condemnation or acquisition of these blocks.

18 It is anticipated that if Penn
19 expansion occurs on these sites, they would be
20 acquired by a State or federal entity to be
21 determined as part of the railroads' review process
22 and they would ultimately be sold or leased for
23 redevelopment through one or more competitive
24 requests for proposals. Such redevelopment would
25 have to accommodate and be coordinated with the

1 expansion of Penn Station beneath the sites and
2 adjacent streets.

3 In addition to coordinating with
4 MTA, Amtrak, and NJT with respect to the potential
5 expansion of Penn Station and the proposed GPP
6 public transportation improvements, ESD has also
7 collaborated with Vornado Realty Trust, the owner or
8 lessee of most of five of the proposed development
9 sites shown here as sites four through eight. The
10 proposed project does not anticipate condemnation of
11 any parcels on these blocks.

12 It should be noted that
13 redevelopment of sites 4 through 8 pursuant to the
14 final GPP and design guidelines cannot commence
15 until ESD executes site-specific agreements with
16 each site owner and/or developer regarding the
17 financial terms including Payments in Lieu of Taxes,
18 or PILOTs, specific transit and public realm
19 improvements that will be made on or proximate to
20 each site and other significant material terms about
21 that site's development.

22 The planning, design, and
23 implementation of public realm improvements has been
24 and will continue to be a joint effort with the
25 railroads, New York City Department of City Planning

1 and the New York City Department of Transportation
2 as well as private property owners in the project
3 area.

4 ESD established a Community
5 Advisory Committee, or CAC, comprising local elected
6 officials, community representatives, urban
7 planners, transportation advocates and other
8 stakeholders to advise us throughout the project.
9 That group met multiple times prior to the adoption
10 of the draft GPP and the issuance of the draft EIS
11 in February.

12 Since that time, ESD staff has
13 worked intensively with the CAC and its larger
14 working group and developed proposed revisions to
15 the plan in response to a set of recommendations
16 prepared by the CAC working group at the end of the
17 summer. Those recommendations are available on the
18 ESD project website.

19 ESD staff intends to propose these
20 revisions as well as other revisions that may arise
21 as a result of public comments received during this
22 review process to the ESD Board of Directors for
23 their consideration in determining whether it should
24 affirm, affirm with modifications or withdraw the
25 GPP.

1 This slide lays out key highlights
2 of ESD staff's proposed revisions to the Draft GPP.
3 Specifically, the proposed total density in the
4 project area would be reduced by about 1.4 million
5 gross square feet, which is equivalent to
6 eliminating one supertall building from the plan.

7 The proposed revisions would
8 increase housing opportunities, requiring at least
9 one residential building with approximately 540
10 units of which 162 will be permanently affordable
11 units and permitting up to about 1,800 residential
12 units total across four sites of which about 540
13 units would be permanently affordable.

14 The proposed revisions would also
15 increase public space in the Project Area and would
16 establish a cross-jurisdictional Public Realm Task
17 Force and Fund modeled on the East Midtown Rezoning
18 Public Realm Improvement Fund Governing Group.

19 With respect to transit access,
20 the proposed revisions would include two options for
21 a train hall on Site 2 if Penn Station expands into
22 this block. One option would locate a train hall in
23 the mid block between Seventh and Eighth Avenue, and
24 the other would place it on Seventh Avenue.

25 These two options allow for

1 flexibility as the railroads' planning for the
2 potential expansion evolves. The proposed revisions
3 would also include two options for a below-grade
4 pedestrian concourse system to alleviate sidewalk
5 congestion by connecting Penn Station to nearby
6 subway stations, including Herald Square and to 34th
7 Street.

8 The proposed revisions also
9 include stricter design controls that would foster
10 active, diversified street frontages and encourage
11 small business tenancies; lower building base
12 heights along 8th Avenue; and prioritize views of
13 the Empire State Building along a more
14 pedestrian-friendly West 33rd Street.

15 Finally, the proposed revisions
16 would mandate requirements for greener buildings,
17 including that all buildings be built to be fully
18 electric and would include labor and MWBE
19 commitments for project construction.

20 The following two slides show a
21 comparison of axonometric views of the development
22 that could occur under the Draft GPP and the
23 proposed revisions with commercial use shown in
24 light blue, hotel use in orange, residential in red,
25 and community facility in pink. The equivalent Floor

1 Area Ratios are indicated for the buildings on sites
2 1, 2, and 3.

3 We will toggle between the draft
4 GPP and the proposed revisions to illustrate the
5 differences, but not these are not designs. These
6 are just massing.

7 If the proposed revisions are
8 incorporated into the final GPP, no site would
9 exceed the equivalent of 30 FAR and the density on
10 sites 1 and 2 would be substantially reduced and
11 reconfigured to step down from east to west.

12 As mentioned, the proposed
13 revisions would permit up to 1,800 residential units
14 in four buildings across three sites, both buildings
15 on site 1, sites 4 and 8 and would require that the
16 mid block, low-rise building on site 1 in the lower
17 left of this image be residential rental with a
18 community facility space on the ground floor. The
19 proposed revisions would also require that 30
20 percent of all residential units, or about 540
21 units, be permanently affordable.

22 The proposed revisions as I
23 mentioned would increase public space in the Project
24 Area even more than the draft GPP by imposing a
25 public space requirement on each site and

1 recommending the New York City Department of
2 Transportation consider making 31st Street between
3 Seventh and Eighth Avenues a shared street. This
4 would be in addition to shared streets on 32nd
5 Street between Sixth and Seventh Avenue and 33rd
6 Street all the way from Sixth to Ninth Avenue.

7 This slide shows a conceptual
8 rendering of the proposed pedestrian-friendly shared
9 33rd Street looking eastward from Ninth Avenue.

10 In total, the proposed revisions
11 would facilitate a creation of about 8 acres of
12 public space in the form of new plazas and open
13 space including a 30,000-square-foot public plaza
14 comparable to Rockefeller Plaza -- shown in a
15 rendering on this slide -- sidewalk widenings,
16 shared streets and new in-building transit entrances
17 that would remove subway entrances from overcrowded
18 sidewalks.

19 If the plan is approved, ESD would
20 launch the before-mentioned Public Realm Task Force
21 that would develop a concept plan of prioritized
22 public realm improvements and guiding principles for
23 public realm design. The Public Realm Task Force
24 would comprise representatives of involved State and
25 City agencies, local elected officials, community

1 boards and civic organizations. A public realm fund
2 to be funded in part by the proposed redevelopment,
3 would pay for the proposed improvements.

4 Finally, as I mentioned earlier,
5 the Proposed Revisions would include two options for
6 a below-grade pedestrian concourse. This slide shows
7 one of the options in orange with an east-west
8 connection between Penn Station and Herald Square
9 Station along West 33rd Street. The other option
10 would locate this connection one block south, along
11 West 32nd Street. The final EIS will study both of
12 these options and the MTA will ultimately determine
13 which is best to implement.

14 The Proposed Project would also
15 provide 18 new highly visible in-building entrances
16 to Penn Station and area subway stations, helping
17 alleviate pinch points at current entries and making
18 it much easier for travelers and commuters to find
19 Penn Station. Other improvements to subway stations
20 would include stair and platform widenings and new
21 elevators and escalators to increase accessibility.

22 This is a very brief summary of
23 the original draft GPP and ESD staff's proposed
24 revisions. I encourage you to review the proposed
25 revisions in more detail on the ESD project website.

1 With that overview, I will now
2 hand the presentation over to Connor Lacefield from
3 AKRF, the lead consultant supporting ESD in the
4 preparation of the project's EIS.

5 MR. LACEFIELD: Thank you, Holly.
6 Good evening, everyone. My name is Connor Lacefield
7 and I am Senior Technical Director at AKRF. I am
8 serving as the Project Manager for ESD's consultant
9 team for the Environmental Impact Statement or EIS.

10 I'm going to provide a very brief
11 summary of the contents of the draft EIS, which
12 analyzed the project as originally proposed. I will
13 then review some of the notable updates that will be
14 presented in the final EIS, which will include an
15 analysis of potential impacts of the project with
16 the proposed revisions that Holly summarized.

17 The draft EIS describes a proposed
18 project and assesses its potential for environmental
19 impacts in a full range of analysis areas. The
20 draft EIS identifies significant adverse impacts in
21 several analysis areas indicated in blue on this
22 slide. These include open space, shadows, historic
23 and cultural resources, visual resources,
24 transportation, noise and construction.

25 As required by SEQRA, the draft

1 EIS identifies practical mitigation measures to
2 eliminate or reduce the identified significant
3 adverse impacts. However, not all impacts can be
4 fully mitigated.

5 We invite you to review the full
6 draft EIS, which is available on ESD's website for
7 more information. ESD is continuing to explore and
8 refine additional mitigation measures for inclusion
9 in the final EIS.

10 As Holly mentioned earlier, after
11 the issuance of the draft EIS, ESD worked closely
12 with the project's Community Advisory Committee and
13 its larger working group to rethink aspects of the
14 proposed project. This effort resulted in the
15 proposed revisions that were summarized earlier.

16 The final EIS will study these
17 proposed revisions where appropriate and update the
18 analyses as needed to reflect the revisions.

19 This slide summarizes some of the
20 notable revisions that we expect to make in the
21 final EIS. The final EIS will study the reduced
22 density, lower building heights and residential uses
23 of the proposed revisions. New and updated views of
24 the Empire State Building will be presented in the
25 final EIS visual resources analysis.

1 The transportation analysis will
2 have several updates including further assessment of
3 the below grade concourse options, a qualitative
4 assessment of the proposed West 31st Street share
5 street, an analysis of pedestrian elements on 9th
6 Avenue and West 31st Street and West 33rd Street.

7 The final EIS will also account
8 for ongoing historic resources consultation and the
9 identification of new state and national register
10 eligible properties in and around the project area.
11 The final EIS will update the analysis years as
12 appropriate and will account for changes and new
13 information regarding other planned development
14 projects in the future no action condition including
15 the nearby Macy's proposal as appropriate.

16 Finally, shown here are the email
17 and USPS mail addresses for providing comments on
18 the GPP, draft EIS and proposed revisions. And a
19 reminder that the close of the comment period will
20 be at 5:00 p.m. at January 10th, 2022.

21 Thank you for your time and we
22 look forward to hearing your comments. I'd like to
23 now hand the presentation back to Celeste.

24 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you,
25 Connor. Now I'd like to take care of some

1 administrative matters by asking the stenographer to
2 mark the following documents as exhibits to the
3 hearing transcript:

4 Exhibit 1, a copy of the public
5 hearing notice that appeared in the New York Daily
6 News along with the affidavit of publication;

7 Exhibit 2, the draft General
8 Project Plan;

9 Exhibit 3, the notice of
10 completion of the Draft Environmental Impact
11 Statement for the project;

12 Exhibit 4, the Draft Environmental
13 Impact Statement;

14 Exhibit 5, a copy of the
15 Environmental Notice bulletin for the notice of
16 acceptance of the DEIS and public hearing dated
17 November 17th, 2021;

18 And Exhibit 6, ESD staff's
19 proposed revision to the plan.

20 Thank you for marking these
21 exhibits.

22 In addition, I'd like to note
23 again that the proposed GPP and the draft EIS for
24 the proposed project are available on ESD's website.
25 The web address is shown on your screen and also it

1 is at esd.ny.gov/penn-station-area. Again, that's
2 esd.ny.gov/penn-station-area.

3 To inspect or obtain copies of the
4 GPP, the revisions proposed by ESD staff and the
5 DEIS from ESD, please call area code 212-803-2477 or
6 email at pennstationarea.esd.ny.gov or the original
7 email address, which is empirestation@esd.ny.gov.

8 Copies of the General Project Plan
9 have been filed in the offices of New York City and
10 county clerks and have been provided to the Mayor of
11 the City of New York, the Manhattan Borough
12 President, the Chair of the New York City Planning
13 Commission and the chairs of Manhattan Community
14 Boards 4 and 5. Copies of the notice of completion
15 with a link to the DEIS have been provided to all
16 involved agencies and to other parties as required
17 under SEQRA.

18 Now before we begin the testimony
19 portion of this public hearing, I'll once again
20 share instructions for those who wish to view the
21 meeting with American sign language interpretation.
22 These are again the instructions for hiding
23 non-video participants on Zoom, whether you have a
24 PC or Android device and the next slide will be if
25 you have a Mac or Apple device.

1 As I mentioned at the beginning of
2 this hearing, if you signed up to speak before the
3 hearing while you were registering for the Zoom, we
4 have your name and you will be called in the order
5 in which you registered.

6 If you did not sign up to speak
7 before the start of the hearing, but would like to
8 speak, please identify yourself using the raise hand
9 function on Zoom. Instructions for how to do this
10 are being shown on your screen right now and will be
11 shown periodically during the hearing.

12 If you're joining us this evening
13 by phone only, you may dial *9 on your keypad to
14 indicate your desire to provide testimony. If you
15 dial *9, the Zoom host will receive a message with
16 your phone number. Participants using the raise
17 hand or *9 will be added to the end of the speaker
18 list and the option to sign up to speak will end 30
19 minutes before the close of the hearing at 7:30 p.m.

20 Each speaker will be allowed three
21 minutes to speak in order to ensure that everyone
22 gets the chance to provide their thoughts here
23 tonight. I will begin by calling the names of those
24 who have registered to speak or the first and last
25 three digits of your phone number if you're using

1 the telephone dial-in option and not the Zoom app.

2 Elected officials, community board
3 district managers or chairs and representatives of a
4 government agency will be provided the courtesy of
5 speaking first.

6 Periodically, you will see a list
7 of the next five speakers on your screen, so that
8 you can prepare for your turn to speak. When your
9 name or the first and last three digits of your
10 phone number is called, you'll be asked to unmute
11 your audio and we'll make sure you're ready before
12 we start the three-minute time clock.

13 You can scroll or swipe to see the
14 time clock on your screen to remind you of the
15 length of time left for your testimony. When three
16 minutes have passed, you already be muted and
17 you'll be invited to send any remaining comments to
18 ESD's mailing or email address.

19 When you begin your testimony,
20 please state your name and your affiliation if you
21 have one for the record.

22 As a reminder, this is a public
23 hearing for the Penn Station Area Redevelopment
24 Project. We encourage all speakers to focus their
25 comments to the GPP, Draft Environmental Impact

1 Statement and proposed revisions for this project.

2 We also ask that speakers exercise
3 civil conduct during your testimony. Speakers using
4 inappropriate language will be muted and cautioned
5 before being allowed to continue.

6 Please also be reminded that
7 tonight is not a question and answer session, but an
8 opportunity to hear testimony.

9 Before we begin -- excuse me.
10 Before we begin with our registered speakers, we'd
11 first like to welcome some of our elected officials
12 who have requested time to provide comment.

13 Our first speaker this evening
14 will be Senator Robert Jackson. Okay. Do we have
15 Senator Jackson or a representatives from his
16 office?

17 (No response.)

18 THE HEARING OFFICER: If not, we'll
19 go on to the next speaker and they'll have another
20 chance if they join us. Okay. Our next speaker will
21 be Anna Kaplan. Anna Kaplan, if you are here,
22 please unmute yourself and let us know when you're
23 ready to speak.

24 MS. KAPLAN: Good evening. I'm
25 ready to speak. My name is Anna Kaplan. I'm New

1 York State Senator for District 7 and I thank you
2 for this opportunity.

3 Long Islanders have suffered with
4 terrible conditions at Penn Station for decades now
5 and the problems are far too great to be addressed
6 by simple renovations alone. The vision for an
7 entirely new Penn Station that will dramatically
8 improve the daily commute for hundreds of thousands
9 of New Yorkers is a game changer for our region and
10 something that must move forward expeditiously as we
11 work to build back better from the pandemic era.

12 I applaud Governor Hochul for her
13 vision to fix the mistakes of prior generations
14 through this transformative investment in world
15 class mass transit infrastructure and I look forward
16 to working with all the stakeholders involved to see
17 this project through its successful completion.
18 Thank you.

19 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
20 your testimony. And thank you very much. Our next
21 speakers will be Richard Gottfried. Assemblymember
22 Gottfried -- and Senator Kaplan, thank you.
23 Assemblymember Gottfried, if you are present or a
24 representative, please indicate -- unmute yourself
25 and indicate when you're ready to speak. Okay.

1 (No response.)

2 THE HEARING OFFICER: Assembly
3 Member Gottfried, if you're here, please let us know
4 or a representatives, otherwise we'll move on to the
5 next speaker.

6 (No response.)

7 THE HEARING OFFICER. Okay. We
8 will revisit that.

9 So your next speaker will be
10 Lowell Kern of Community Board 4. Lowell Kern, if
11 you're ready to speak, please unmute your mic and
12 let us know when you're ready to begin.

13 MR. KERN: I am just about ready.
14 I've just got to get my testimony up, so I can do
15 this accurately. All right. Are you ready for me?

16 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes, go
17 ahead.

18 MR. KERN: All right. My name is
19 Lowell Kern. I'm the Chair of Manhattan Community
20 Board 4. CB 4's testimony today is being presented
21 in two parts. I am covering some of the broader
22 topics and Paul Devlin, the co-chair of the Board's
23 Chelsea land use committee, will be addressing more
24 specific items.

25 At the outset, let me make clear

1 that only one project site in the General Project
2 Plan, lot 1, is located in the area served by CB 4.

3 However, there are certain issues
4 that pertain to the project generally that affect
5 lot 1. CB 4 will restrict its comments to lot 1 and
6 those general issues that impact lot 1. To the
7 extent that CB 4 does not comment on portions of the
8 GPP is because we see those issues as the province
9 of our sister board, Community Board 5, and we defer
10 to their judgment on the issues that affect their
11 community district.

12 Four members of CB 4 have been
13 involved in the revisions to the General Project
14 Plan as members of the Community Advisory Council
15 working group. In addition, I served on the steering
16 committee of the CAC.

17 As Empire State Development is
18 well aware, the working group met for many months
19 hearing from a number of stakeholders, community
20 members and experts in the area of transportation.

21 As a result of this process, the
22 community members and elected officials collectively
23 provided a series of recommendations and comments to
24 the ESD setting forth changes to the GPP that the
25 community required. When Governor Hochul took

1 office, she was involved in the review of the
2 recommendations. As a result, the ESD came back to
3 the working group with a revised GPP, which
4 incorporated a number of elements that the working
5 group requested.

6 However, in the eyes of Manhattan
7 Community Board 4, while the revised GPP provided a
8 number of benefits, it still fails in significant
9 ways to meet all of the community's needs.

10 Mr. Devlin will address these issues in more detail.

11 At CB 4's full board meeting on
12 December 1st, we conducted a public hearing on those
13 aspects of the GPP that affect our area. We
14 acknowledge and appreciate the participation of ESD
15 at this meeting -- thank you, Holly -- and in
16 providing an overview of the entire GPP to CB 4.
17 Following this presentation, CB 4 conducted a public
18 hearing for solicited comments from members of our
19 community.

20 Finally, during the business
21 session of our December 1st meeting, the board
22 discussed and voted on a letter to ESD outlining the
23 board's decision. This letter took the form of a
24 deny unless, which is CB 4 standard approach. In
25 that letter certain additional requirements were set

1 forth that board needs fulfilled in order to support
2 the GPP.

3 However, I will note here that the
4 letter dated December 6th, which has already been
5 submitted to ESD, was approved by a vote of 36 in
6 favor, 1 opposed with 6 abstentions.

7 Since I've been discussing
8 process, I want to highlight two issues that CB 4
9 has with regard to the GPP. First -- and this was
10 raised by the working group and rejected by ESD --
11 CB 4 again asks that the entire project be made
12 subject to ULURP. Community boards are very used to
13 working with the City's ULURP process and CB 4 feels
14 that a project of this size should be subject to the
15 city's formal review process to make sure that all
16 concerned parties, including the city council, have
17 an opportunity to weigh in.

18 Next, the NPR process, which the
19 railroads are handling, is for the southern
20 expansion of Penn Station is on a completely
21 different timeline than the GPP. However, the
22 benefits that the GPP provides, such as support
23 affordable housing and community facilities on lot
24 1, are completely dependent on the NPR process. The
25 benefits will not -- for lot 1 will not be realized

1 if the southern expansion is not undertaken.

2 These processes need to be
3 coordinated. By splitting them, the community is
4 put in a position where we'll be forced to choose
5 between the southern expansion or housing and
6 community facilities regardless of whatever
7 drawbacks the neper process reveals. For more
8 details --

9 THE HEARING OFFICER: Mr. Kern, I
10 will just pause to let you know we'll give you the
11 courtesy of a bit more time, but you have actually
12 exceeded your three minutes.

13 MR. KERN: All I was going to say
14 is for more details on Community Board 4's concerns,
15 I'll turn this over to Paul Devlin.

16 THE HEARING OFFICER: We'll
17 actually call on the next member in turn for when
18 they -- when they're next -- when they come up on
19 the list. Thank you very much. All right.

20 Next on our speaker list will be
21 Tom Wright. Tom, if you are here, you may unmute
22 and let us know when you're ready.

23 MR. WRIGHT: Sure. Am I on?

24 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes, you are.
25 Thank you.

1 MR. WRIGHT: Okay. Thanks. Good
2 evening. I'm Tom Wright, President and Ceo of
3 Regional Plan Association. For nearly a hundred
4 years, RPA has developed and promoted ideas to
5 improve the tri-state area including the region's
6 transit networks, housing and community development
7 and open space preservation and resiliency. We --
8 for many decades fixing Penn Station and improving
9 the trans-Hudson commute has been a signature
10 priority for RPA and we now have an opportunity to
11 do something historic with Penn Station, so we are
12 supporting this General Project Plan and encouraging
13 all of the partners to continue moving forward with
14 it.

15 The GPP puts in place a framework
16 for renovating and expanding Penn Station and
17 captures some of the value created by the billions
18 of dollars, which will be invested in improved
19 transit connections in public spaces. It will use
20 those increased values to help pay for the project
21 costs. While the details of this value capture
22 strategies still need to be worked out and indeed
23 the plans for the renovation expansion of Penn
24 station itself aren't yet completely finalized, this
25 policy and financial framework are both necessary to

1 support these enormous public investments.

2 By increasing density and planning
3 for growth in the district immediately surrounding
4 Penn Station, we are taking advantage of new rail
5 connections including two new rail tracks under the
6 Hudson River and a connection from Penn Station to
7 four new stations in the Bronx and a one-seat ride
8 to the service -- to the New Haven one. More work
9 will need to be done to improve the urban design,
10 public spaces and connectivity to the surrounding
11 neighborhoods, but again, the plan here provides a
12 foundation for that work and support these efforts.

13 I want to applaud Empire State
14 Development and their team, which has worked for
15 several months now with the Community Advisory
16 Committee and is working through these complicated
17 questions and -- about how best to integrate these
18 plans for the station, expansion and renovation and
19 how to connect the street level and below ground
20 investments. These plans have changed as a result
21 of community feedback and gotten better and more
22 responsive to local needs without sacrificing the
23 broader regional goals and improved access and
24 connectivity.

25 There might be some that are going

1 to argue that Penn Station doesn't need to expand
2 the handle the additional commuters from the gateway
3 tunnel and Penn access and that rather just a
4 rebuild of the existing station can handle this. We
5 looked closely at this issue in RPA and agree with
6 virtually all the transit operators in the region
7 that more tracks and platforms will be necessary and
8 expanding Penn Station to the south is the best and
9 really the only viable alternative.

10 We mustn't forget that Penn
11 Station currently operates well beyond its designed
12 capacity and plans for new rail capacity and
13 passenger demand can not be accommodated without the
14 expansion and renovation of the station. There are
15 many ways to increase capacity at the margins, but
16 none of them can handle the anticipated gateway
17 passengers.

18 And the expansion and renovation
19 need to be planned and designed together as a single
20 transit hub to maximize the benefits and provide the
21 best possible customer experience and neighborhood
22 amenities to create a seamless regional hub that
23 connects the core of the region to all its suburbs
24 and those suburbs to each other.

25 So once again on behalf Of

1 Regional Plan Association, we're supportive of the
2 GPP and applaud this work to move it forward. Thank
3 you very much for the opportunity to testify this
4 evening.

5 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you.
6 Our next speaker will be Andrea Goldwyn. Andrea
7 Goldwyn, if you would like to unmute yourself and
8 let us know when you're ready to begin.

9 MS. GOLDWYN: Okay.

10 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. You
11 may begin.

12 MS. GOLDWYN: Great. Thank you.
13 Good evening. I'm Andrea Goldwyn speaking on behalf
14 of the New York Landmarks Conservancy. The
15 Conservancy is a 47-year-old organization dedicated
16 to preserving, revitalizing and reusing New York's
17 historic buildings and neighborhoods.

18 We support improving Penn Station,
19 but we ask you to halt this proposal. There has
20 been no comprehensive explanation of the full plan
21 and its funding, no broad public outreach and no
22 discussion of the thoughtful alternatives that have
23 been proposed. We need to be sure that a project of
24 this magnitude is done right.

25 Were this made to see the widely

1 discredited policy of urban renewal as a centerpiece
2 of this plan. The complete proposal, including the
3 areas under separate agency purview such as block
4 780, entails demolition of over 50 historic
5 buildings. Some listed or eligible for listing on
6 the National Register of Historic Places.

7 In this profoundly antiurban
8 proposal, the State assumes that this neighborhood
9 should be sacrificed. It's a vibrant commercial
10 district, has a variety of buildings that support a
11 diverse array of activities and businesses. The
12 dynamic mix of old and new makes New York unique and
13 successful. The renderings for a campus of new
14 supertalls and bland public spaces present an
15 anodyne vision that could literally be anywhere in
16 the world. The opaque segmented process around this
17 proposal has left out New York City's residents. It
18 abandons heartfelt transparent community engagement.

19 This would add millions of square
20 feet of new development with none of the local
21 zoning controls that every other building owner has
22 to follow. ULURP was established nearly 50 years ago
23 in response to top down cons that devastated
24 communities. A project that will have such a
25 significant impact on the City should follow ULURP.

1 We've heard about the multiple
2 stakeholder meetings. Many of those were private.
3 There's been ruled off media attention. By the time
4 this meeting is over, there will have been about
5 eight hours of total public engagement for a plan
6 that intends to entirely transform a section of the
7 City.

8 Because of the segmented process,
9 we've heard skimp details, but exactly how funds
10 will be generated and how they will benefit the
11 City, we request a transparent analysis of the costs
12 to acquire development sites, construct new
13 buildings, and complete transit improvement. This
14 plan relies on an unlimited demand for new
15 commercial office space.

16 We believe in the future of New
17 York, but current projections raise significant
18 questions about that assumption. We already have
19 one Hudson Yard. If there's a need for more office
20 space, buildings like the one set for demolition
21 will be well positioned to address it. There will
22 soon be a new city, administration and council, a
23 pause with allowed time to elicit their views of a
24 transparent and comprehensive community engagement
25 and answer the many questions raised about whether

1 this is the best way to create the station that the
2 public deserves.

3 Thank you for the opportunity to
4 present the conservancy's views.

5 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you
6 very much. And our next speaker will be Vikki
7 Barbero. Vikki, if you're ready to speak, please
8 unmute and let us know.

9 MS. BARBERO: Okay. I am unmuted.
10 Can you hear me?

11 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes. Please
12 proceed when you're ready.

13 MS. BARBERO: Okay. Good evening.
14 My name is Vikki Barbero and I am the Chair of
15 Manhattan Community Board 5. Thank you for the
16 opportunity to provide comments on the GPP, the
17 revised draft EIS and its related actions.

18 In March 2021, CB 5 passed a
19 resolution recommending denial of the original GPP.
20 Responding to the overwhelming opposition to the
21 original plan, ESD convened a community advisory
22 committee working group to better inform
23 stakeholders of the project and to seek more
24 meaningful input, which led to a revised GPP.

25 We welcome this opportunity to

1 provide the following comments on the revised plan.
2 We find that CB 5's concerns and objections are not
3 addressed in a meaningful way and we strongly reject
4 the revised GPP. While we recognize that increased
5 density around transit hubs is desirable, the
6 proposal is overwhelming in scale, massing and
7 concentration. Its negative effects remain
8 unmitigated and would be devastating to the area.

9 The two -- the 10 towers clustered
10 in the very small perimeter would still bring
11 extreme density with some buildings rising to a 30
12 FAR. It would cause the destruction of five city
13 blocks and would create very dark streets.

14 It would force dozens of
15 residents, hundreds of businesses and thousands of
16 workers to be displaced. It would cause the
17 demolition of numerous turn of the century historic
18 building. This destruction of this scale is
19 unprecedented.

20 We are also deeply concerned that
21 the State would override the City in a land use
22 action. Municipalities are sovereign on zoning and
23 planning and unless it serves a strong public
24 purpose, the State should not get involved. This
25 land use plan is being pushed way before three

1 critical transit related plans: The Penn
2 reconstruction, Penn expansion and the gateway
3 tunnels.

4 Until these plans are finalized,
5 it makes no sense to proceed with a land use action
6 that may not even support its transit counterpart.

7 We believe that Penn Station is an
8 absolute priority, but Penn station cannot be
9 overhauled unless MSG is relocated. This plan
10 refuses to address this fundamental issue. This is
11 a once in a lifetime opportunity to really address
12 decades of mistakes, wrong decisions, poor
13 management and ill-dotted plans.

14 It is time for an ambitious plan
15 that provides the connectivity the region needs.
16 We're through running to promote a strong public
17 transportation system that will take people out of
18 cars and address the existential dread of climate
19 change. This plan accomplishes none of these goals.
20 It must be retired.

21 Once the transit plans have been
22 finalized, the City should take the necessary land
23 use and public realm actions that will best support
24 the needs brought by the world class transit hub
25 that we deserve. We were robbed of a world class

1 transit hub once. Let's make sure we do not get
2 robbed of a world class transit station a second
3 time. Thank you very much.

4 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you
5 very much and at this time Assemblymember Richard
6 Gottfried has joined us, so we will ask
7 Assemblymember Gottfried to speak. If you would like
8 to -- if you can unmute yourself and let us when
9 you're ready to speak. Assemblymember Gottfried, I
10 can see you and you're not --

11 MR. GOTTFRIED: I just got
12 unmuted. Okay. So good evening. I am
13 Assemblymember Richard Gottfried. This testimony is
14 on behalf of myself; U.S. Representatives, Jerrold
15 Nadler and Carolyn Maloney; State Senators, Brad
16 Hoylman and Robert Jackson; and Manhattan Borough
17 President Gale Brewer.

18 We appreciate this opportunity to
19 submit comments regarding the General Project Plan
20 for the Penn State -- Pennsylvania Station Area
21 Civic and Land Use Improvement Project. The
22 following are selected comments from our full
23 testimony.

24 Our districts, which cover Penn
25 Station and the neighborhoods around it, including

1 the proposed expansion and development areas, have
2 been -- have seen enormous growth in residential and
3 commercial development and the associated congestion
4 in our transit system and on our streets over the
5 past two decades. The Empire Station Community
6 Advisory Committee Working Group, or CAC WG,
7 released its initial response to the proposed
8 General Project Plan in August.

9 The report reflected input from
10 two town halls and a series of 10 issue-focused
11 meetings over the course of 14 weeks, ranging from
12 transportation to financing to public space with
13 significant engagement and support from ESD, the MTA
14 and Amtrak on technical details of the proposal.

15 We're pleased to see many of these
16 recommendations take formal shape in the revised
17 GPP. In response to our concerns about the density
18 and height level of new development, the revised
19 plan removed the equivalent of one supertall
20 building from the overall density. While this is
21 significant, we would still like to see less
22 commercial density. This includes -- the inclusion
23 of residential development, especially the adding of
24 539 units of affordable housing, will be a
25 significant step towards tackling the housing crisis

1 faced by our communities and the City.

2 The increase in public space
3 including a new shared streets -- including new
4 shared streets and the creation of a Public Realm
5 Task Force will greatly benefit the pedestrian
6 experience for local residents and commuters.

7 What follows are key areas that
8 require further consideration. Many of these ideas
9 are expanded upon in the testimony submitted by
10 Manhattan Community Boards 4 and 5. As the
11 communities most impacted by Penn Station and its
12 operations, we encourage you -- we encourage your
13 thorough review of these -- of their testimonies.

14 Community benefits. The revised
15 GPP includes many recommendations by the CAC WG;
16 however, many of these recommendations -- many of
17 the recommendations relating to direct community
18 benefits, including affordable housing, are not
19 guaranteed and are reliant on the separate approval
20 of the southern expansion alternative for Penn
21 Station. If the southern expansion does not occur,
22 there would be no requirement for community
23 facilities on any of the remaining sites as
24 currently proposed. We want to see the alternative
25 site proposal for these benefits if these -- if the

1 southern expansion does not occur.

2 Affordable housing and density.

3 We appreciate the significant reduction in
4 commercial density for the -- from the original plan
5 with consideration of shadows and sightlines.
6 However, there is still too much office space.
7 Commercial vacancy rates are at nearly 20 percent
8 and there is unused office space at World Trade and
9 Hudson Yards. With these develop -- with these
10 levels of density, there must be increased
11 residential zoning including mandatory affordable
12 and support of housing on sites 4 through 8. It
13 should be prioritized over additional commercial
14 space.

15 Residential displacement. We
16 understand that any resident -- residents displaced
17 by Penn expansion project on sites 1 through 3
18 would -- who income certify would have a right to
19 return to an affordable unit on site 1A. Current
20 rent-regulated tenants at risk of displacement
21 should remain rent regulated regardless of whether
22 they are income qualified for an affordable unit.

23 We want to ensure that the
24 residential buildings are the first to be built, to
25 provide an easier transition for the residents who

1 will be displaced and commitment that the GPP must
2 provide permanent relocation of residential tenants
3 within the immediate area, if desired, at the
4 tenant's existing affordability levels. If site 1A
5 is not built, residents should be relocated onto
6 another site.

7 Small business development. Any
8 plan that results in the displacement of small
9 businesses should offer temporary spaces during the
10 construction period and relocation within the new
11 towers for existing small businesses, stores and
12 nonprofits of similar size to current locations at
13 current rent levels. It is important that we retain
14 the 10,000 jobs attached to these spaces.

15 Public realm. We are pleased to
16 see the creation of a public realm task force and
17 look forward to its participation by a wide array of
18 stakeholders. Public realm improvements should be
19 the star of this plan and the creation of this task
20 force will help ensure that occurs. It is critical
21 that all new developments be designed with the
22 pedestrian experience at the forefront.

23 Large commercial building
24 entrances replace any potential for vibrant street
25 life with dead space. The reduction in maximum

1 local -- in maximum lobby widths will allow
2 lobbies -- will still allow lobbies to take up to
3 100 feet in multiple locations. Station entrances
4 should be large, easy to find and easy to -- and
5 consistent in design to ensure convenient wayfinding
6 for transit users.

7 Train Hall. We remain advocates
8 of a large avenue-facing train hall. Of the two
9 options for a train hall on the potential expansion
10 block, we favor a store -- a strong preference -- we
11 have a strong preference for the avenue facing
12 option rather than a mid block train hall; however,
13 either option will be offset from the majority of
14 tracks.

15 With nearly 70 percent of users
16 heading east, the block frontage of 2 Penn is an
17 ideal location for an aboveground train hall that is
18 centered over the below grade tracks and that can
19 provide a connection to a unified concourse level.
20 Amtrak, MTA and New Jersey Transit must engage the
21 users of Penn Station and the surrounding community
22 on the renovation of the station and the Penn
23 Station master plan.

24 Below-grade coordination. As
25 below ground track work progresses, there must be

1 coordination with regard to the aboveground station
2 improvements. Proposals must have public review.
3 There should be one agency that leads the
4 implementation of an overall integrated plan with a
5 project director who coordinates all develop -- all
6 agencies and developers involved as was done with
7 the rebuilding of lower Manhattan.

8 Social services. The area in and
9 around Penn Station has a high quantity of unhoused
10 individuals and illegal substance use. The solution
11 is to use this redevelopment as an opportunity to
12 rectify these injustices in our own backyard; to
13 provide support of housing for our unhoused
14 neighbors; to have a substantial space for social
15 service providers to provide drop-in centers, health
16 services, addiction treatment, job training and
17 more.

18 Madison Square Garden. The impact
19 of MSG operations must be taken into account when
20 planning for the surrounding streets and sidewalks,
21 including current -- including customer flow and
22 loading operations. Understanding the challenges of
23 moving the Garden, moving MSG, is in the best
24 long-term interests to provide for a grand
25 aboveground train hall, allow for track expansion

1 without displacing residents, facilitate ease of
2 public realm improvements and provide for the
3 addition of through running.

4 THE HEARING OFFICER:

5 Assemblymember Gottfried, thank you so much. If I
6 could just ask you to wrap up. We have over -- we
7 have close to 200 speakers we'd like to have the
8 opportunity to hear tonight.

9 MR. GOTTFRIED: My last point is
10 that we need a lot more -- to work with unions
11 involved to assure that there will be local hiring
12 and local opportunities for career expansion and
13 local hiring should continue after construction is
14 completed. Thank you very much for this opportunity
15 to testify.

16 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you
17 very much. Our next speaker will be Paul Devlin.
18 Paul Devlin, if you would like to unmute yourself
19 and let us know what you're ready.

20 MR. DEVLIN: Hi. I'm ready. Thank
21 you. My name is Paul Devlin. I'm cochair of the
22 Chelsea Land Use Committee of Manhattan Community
23 Board 4. At our last fall meeting, CB 4 voted to
24 oppose the revised project GPP unless ESD addresses
25 concerns that continue to impact the community. Our

1 issues from our July 2020 position on the DEIS
2 remain mostly the same.

3 The greatest cause of concern is
4 that the process is inverted and that we started by
5 looking at how many development rights could be sold
6 to support transit needs. Instead the transit needs
7 should be determined first. Then we figure out how
8 to move people through the network and public space,
9 then determine funding sources.

10 Building 17 million square feet of
11 office towers is not a model for a sustainable city
12 of the future. Instead, building an integrated
13 transit hub that is supported by commercial, retail,
14 residential and community facilities will ensure a
15 successful and vibrant city.

16 ESD has been responsive to the
17 community throughout this process. This latest
18 revised project plan has been altered to reduce the
19 overall density, to add in permanent affordable
20 housing and to commit to more public engagement.

21 However, this alternative proposal
22 places a great proportion of the concessions upon
23 blocks that are not guaranteed to be part of the
24 area redevelopment. The reconfiguration of rail
25 lines below grade is on a different timetable than

1 the GPP and is being led by a different agency using
2 a federal instead of a state process.

3 The transit redesign may have an
4 outcome that does not include a southern expansion
5 of Penn Station. The proposed southern expansion
6 would raise and then rebuild three city blocks.
7 Those three blocks are the only sites that the
8 revised GPP will require housing, the only blocks
9 that will offer community facilities and the only
10 blocks that ensure more than 17 percent open space
11 on any one site.

12 With or without a southern
13 expansion of Penn Station, we urge ESD to increase
14 the minimum open space requirements on sites 4
15 through 8, that permanently affordable housing is
16 required on at least one of the sites 4 through 8
17 and that RFP for sites 4 through 8 include community
18 facility space.

19 In addition, we urge ESD to commit
20 to a shared street along West 34th Street, to fund
21 future task forces with equal parity as MGA funding,
22 to make sidewalks free of obstruction such as trash,
23 deliveries and utility sources and have building
24 entrances focus on access to Penn Station rather
25 than office buildings.

1 It is critical that ESD reevaluate
2 the funding of this project to place transportation
3 needs first, then public realm issues and then the
4 development of office towers last.

5 We urge you to look at a variety
6 of income streams, such as contributions from
7 Madison Square Garden or additional bonding or
8 federal and state contribution from sources such as
9 the gateway tunnel project. And we urge the
10 constant reevaluation of market rates for the
11 pricing of any development rights that are
12 purchased.

13 We look forward to an integrated
14 global transportation hub in our neighborhood and I
15 thank you for your time and efforts in all of this
16 work.

17 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you.
18 At this time we will move to our speaker list. The
19 next four speakers will be:

20 Mike Kavanagh;

21 Matt Kamper;

22 Brian Fritsch;

23 And George Haikalis (phonetic).

24 So the next speaker will be Mike Kavanagh. Mike
25 Kavanagh, if you are ready to speak, please unmute

1 yourself and let us know.

2 (No response.)

3 THE HEARING OFFICER: Mike
4 Kavanagh, if you are on the line, please unmute
5 yourself and let us know that you are ready to
6 speak. I believe Mike Kavanagh is on the Zoom, if
7 you can please let us know when you're ready to
8 speak. Otherwise we'll need to move on to the next
9 speaker.

10 (No response.)

11 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. In
12 that case -- one moment. In that case, we will move
13 to our next speaker who will be Matt Kamper. Matt
14 Kamper -- excuse me -- if you are ready to speak,
15 please unmute your audio and let us now that you're
16 ready.

17 MR. KAMPER: Okay. I am all set.
18 Can you hear me?

19 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes, we can.
20 Thank you. Go ahead.

21 MR. KAMPER: Okay. Good evening,
22 everybody. I'm here tonight to speak about the Penn
23 Station project and I am a frequent rider who uses
24 the Long Island Railroad to get to and from
25 Manhattan, transferring in Manhattan to get to New

1 Jersey. I do it every couple of weeks and I go
2 through Manhattan all the time. I've done it all --
3 most of my lifetime going into Manhattan using the
4 Long Island Railroad.

5 Penn Station is an absolute
6 antiquated station that for a long time has been
7 talked about being renovated. And I am a complete
8 support of this project. I think it is about time
9 that this station gets what it deserves.

10 At one point Penn Station could
11 handle up to 600,000 riders or something like that
12 or a half a million riders per day. It exceeded
13 that pre-pandemic before the COVID-19 pandemic hit
14 us. And now that ridership is starting to come back
15 and with the gateway tunnel project, hopefully the
16 federal government will do the right thing and bring
17 that in to play, Penn access with metro north coming
18 into Penn Station. It is time that riders get what
19 they deserve.

20 I use Penn Station all the time.
21 It is so congested, [Zoom inaudible]. It's just a
22 station that I believe is -- the time basically is
23 now for Penn Station to get its renovation.

24 I completely support the -- having
25 a southern side of Penn station. Especially -- New

1 Jersey Transit will still use that point of Penn
2 Station upstairs where riders from Amtrak used to
3 use.

4 Amtrak and Long Island Railroad
5 riders have their own place. Why can't New Jersey
6 transit riders.

7 And absolutely, I completely agree
8 with Governor Hochul. I think what riders deserve
9 is a new Penn Station and I really am hoping that we
10 can do something to allow more space inside Penn
11 Station for riders to be able to move around.

12 And as far as the underpass
13 between Penn Station and 6th Avenue, I am also in
14 complete support of that. There are a lot of riders
15 who needs to get from Penn station over to 6th
16 Avenue, such as --

17 THE HEARING OFFICER: This is the
18 15 second warning.

19 MR. KAMPER: Okay. So basically I
20 am in support of this and I'm really hoping you guys
21 at ESD can approve this. Thank you so much.

22 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you.
23 Our next speaker will be Brian Fritsch. Brian
24 Fritsch, if you are on the call, please unmute
25 yourself and let us know that you are ready to

1 begin.

2 MR. FRITSCH: All right. Thanks so
3 much for having me. Yeah, I couldn't agree with the
4 last speaker more. The time is now to complete the
5 Penn Station project and, you know, as the manager
6 of advocacy campaigns for Regional Plan Association
7 for the last 110 years, RPA has developed and
8 provided ideas to improve the economic health,
9 environmental resiliency and quality of life to the
10 New York, New Jersey, Connecticut metropolitan area.
11 It includes considerable work on improving transit
12 options and ensuring equitable access for all.

13 For decades, we've advocated for
14 improving the unsafe conditions at Penn Station and
15 unifying the fractions of this disjoining station.
16 We've waited long enough to make improvements. With
17 unprecedented support from New York, New Jersey and
18 the federal government, we believe the opportunity
19 to fix Penn Station has finally arrived.

20 We're pleased with Governor
21 Hochul's smart alterations to the GPP. An area
22 treated as an afterthought for generations will now
23 have new open space, affordable housing, bikeways,
24 services and more. The last progress however on the
25 transportational elements of the plan including

1 consensus on the renovations of the existing station
2 and the need for process for the expansion of the
3 station are fairly disappointing.

4 We strongly support
5 transit-oriented development around the station and
6 it must be crystal clear that these -- what these
7 improvements will be.

8 To be successful, we must
9 transform the current transportation maze into a
10 modern world class facility. At the same time, we
11 need to reduce overcrowding, increase streamline
12 transit access, invest in affordable housing and
13 create a pedestrian focused -- a pedestrian-focused
14 streetscape. To do that, all of these agencies, New
15 York, New Jersey and local stakeholders and the
16 largely absent municipal government must be fully
17 invested in this project.

18 The NSA administration must be off
19 the table. That may require additional government
20 structure beyond the role of ESD as permanently
21 serving. Uniform investment from all parties is
22 direly needed to deliver the unified station, which
23 is long overdue and well deserved.

24 The value of land around Penn
25 Station is increasingly now in anticipation of -- is

1 increasing now in anticipation of future
2 developments and investments.

3 If the public commits to
4 significant investments that dramatically increase
5 property values, we must capture the creative value
6 of -- in favor of public investment.

7 THE HEARING OFFICER: 10 second
8 warning.

9 MR. FRITSCH: Okay. We need -- we
10 need to act immediately. The window to do so won't
11 stay open forever. We must not miss the fortuitous
12 in the intersection of circumstances to complete
13 the Penn --

14 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you.
15 Thank you, speaker. Please feel free to submit the
16 balance of your testimony via email or U.S. mail.
17 Our next speaker will be George Haikalis. George
18 Haikalis, if you would like to unmute yourself and
19 let us know you're ready to begin.

20 (No response.)

21 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. I
22 believe that George Haikalis is not on the call, so
23 we'll move to our next set of five speakers. Our
24 next set of five speakers will be:

25 Christine Berthet;.

1 Jeffrey LeFrancois;
2 Evan Cooper;
3 Roberta Gelb;
4 And Thomas Devaney.

5 First on that list will be
6 Christine Berthet. Christine, if you -- Christine
7 Berthet. You may have registered, but may not be
8 speaking. I'll give one moment if we have Christine
9 Berthet on the call.

10 (No response.)

11 THE HEARING OFFICER: No? Okay.
12 We'll move to the next speaker and come back. Our
13 next speaker will be Jeffrey LeFrancois.

14 Jeffrey LeFrancois, if you'd like
15 to unmute yourself and let us know you're ready to
16 begin. Jeffrey LeFrancois, if you're on the -- if
17 you're in the hearing, please unmute your audio and
18 let us know you're ready to begin.

19 (No response.)

20 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. At
21 this time we'll move on to the next speaker. Our
22 next speaker will be Evan Cooper. Evan Cooper, if
23 you're on the call, please unmute your audio and let
24 us know you're ready to begin.

25 SPEAKER: Good evening. I'm sorry.

1 There's been a change in our schedule. We have a
2 representative who will be making our statement when
3 she's called on in time. Thank you.

4 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you.
5 Okay. We'll move on then to the next speaker who I
6 believe -- the next registered speaker is Roberta
7 Gelb. Roberta Gelb, if you --

8 MS. GELB: I'm here. I am here.

9 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. You
10 may begin.

11 MS. GELB: Thank you for the
12 opportunity. My name is Roberta Gelb and I've lived
13 in Chelsea for almost 45 years and this is the most
14 blatant and outrageous move to give developers land
15 and bypass the ULURP process.

16 Look what we have instead of a
17 hospital on West 13th Street. We have housing that
18 the average New Yorker will never be able to afford.
19 The Lower West Side has been left without local
20 access to a level one trauma center.

21 Many people, myself including,
22 thought this was a project to redevelop Penn
23 Station. I was delighted. We all want to see Penn
24 Station redeveloped. No one knew that this involved
25 the complete destruction of at least one square

1 block.

2 The New York City Charter requires
3 certain actions be reviewed by the City Planning
4 Commission and undergo a uniform land use review
5 procedure. This project has bypassed the ULURP
6 process. They have gone around this. I've never
7 seen a project of this magnitude bypass the ULURP
8 project -- process.

9 As a New York resident, I want to
10 see that ULURP process be followed. Why is this one
11 of the few public hearings that we have an
12 opportunity to attend? ESD is claiming we need
13 additional commercial space when the vacancy rate in
14 commercial space was high even before Covid. Do we
15 really need commercial towers? We don't need them
16 and we don't want them.

17 Also, there are a hundred tenants
18 and at least 25 percent are rent stabilized. If
19 their building is demolished, they will lose
20 protections. There's talk about 59 units of
21 affordable housing, but they never define what
22 affordable is.

23 They talk about relocation and
24 they talk about other things. If this passes, we
25 need to know exactly how these tenants will be

1 protected. Tenants and businesses need to be
2 reimbursed for all expenses related to relocation.

3 Also where is the financial
4 accounting? Who's getting what? We want to be able
5 to follow the money and the offerings made to
6 anybody involved in this. If they float bonds and
7 they default on them, who we, as taxpayers, have to
8 cover them?

9 Remember one thing, everybody on
10 this call. Your block, your home, your business may
11 be next. Force New York State and ESD to address
12 the issues and go through the ULURP process. Thank
13 you.

14 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you
15 very much. Our next speaker will be Thomas Devaney.
16 Thomas Devaney, please unmute yourself.

17 MR. DEVANEY: Good evening. I'm
18 Tom Devaney, Senior Director of Land Use and
19 Planning at the Municipal Art Society. I'll also
20 add that Municipal Art Society president, Elizabeth
21 Goldstein, is a member of the aforementioned
22 Citizens Advisory Committee.

23 For over a generation, many have
24 wrestled with the prospect of increasing capacity of
25 Penn Station and improving surrounding

1 neighborhoods. No concrete area plan has come to
2 fruition. MAS with its long history of advocacy
3 regarding Penn Station understands all too well the
4 current challenges affecting a real solution for
5 what is to arguably New York City's and the region's
6 most significant transit infrastructure issue.

7 ESD seeks to increase track
8 capacity, improve pedestrian access at the station
9 and nearby transit stations and deliver financial
10 support for the project by creating a mixed-use
11 transit-oriented neighborhood through the
12 construction of 10 towers and over 18 million square
13 feet of development.

14 Fundamental questions remain about
15 the project. Is it driven by public benefits? Will
16 it lead to demonstrably improved transit capacity
17 and pedestrian connections? Is the rationale for the
18 magnitude of the development [Zoom inaudible]? Is
19 the project set up to adequately respond to the
20 challenge of coordinating multiple agencies and
21 levels of government? Does it include forward
22 thinking comprehensive solutions for long term local
23 and regional transit infrastructure issues that will
24 achieve a thriving neighborhood?

25 MAS believes that there is a

1 reason for classist activism.

2 Long Island track train hall shows
3 that great civic transit space is possible in New
4 York. The gateway program, which will double the
5 capacity of trains into Penn station, has found a
6 willing partner in the Biden administration.

7 Moreover, with the passing of the
8 infrastructure act, there's a once in a generation
9 funding opportunity to advance the revisioning of
10 Penn Station and the surrounding area. The long
11 overdue funding is certainly welcome news, but the
12 provision of federal dollars does not ensure that
13 the plan is driven by public benefits who will make
14 Penn Station a singular building and experience that
15 New Yorkers can be proud of. For the area's public
16 realm effective in appealing or the surrounding area
17 truly a newly envisioned neighborhood.

18 Achieving these goals is the true
19 challenge ahead for ESD and the rail agencies. ESD
20 has added more residential units, slightly reduced
21 the overall density and committed to create a public
22 realm task force. These are positive changes.
23 However, the overall project has a long way to go
24 before it is in the best position to meet the
25 overall goals.

1 ESD cannot be the only
2 stakeholder. It must be driven by a true
3 collaboration with ESD, Amtrak, the MTA and New
4 Jersey Transit in constant dialogue with community
5 and citywide stakeholders to achieve an integrated
6 comprehensive plan for the station in the
7 neighborhood. Collaboration should --

8 THE HEARING OFFICER: 10 second
9 warning.

10 MR. DEVANEY: Okay. I will say
11 that the time is now for ESD to take advantage of
12 the fortuitous funding opportunity. However, we
13 must not let the opportunity pass to come up with a
14 comprehensive plan for Penn Station and the
15 surrounding area to create great civic space or
16 solve the area's most vexing local and regional
17 transit --

18 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you.
19 We are now moving to our next list of five speakers.
20 The next five speakers will be:

21 Samuel Turvey;
22 Omri Semadar -- or Semader
23 (phonetic);
24 Brad Vogel;
25 Jeffrey Kroessler;

1 And George Calderaro.

2 The first speaker of this list
3 will be Samuel Turvey. You may unmute yourself and
4 begin when you're ready.

5 MR. TURVEY: Can you hear me?

6 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

7 MR. TURVEY: Thank you. I'm Sam
8 Turvey. I'm the chairperson of ReThinkNYC and a
9 founding member of the Empire Station Coalition, but
10 I'd like to start by saying that Governor Hochul's
11 plan does not in any way create a world class
12 transit-oriented commercial district. This is a
13 buzz word that you will see in the Environmental
14 Impact Statement that is used as a needs to justify
15 the ends of a state failing to remediate many of the
16 known toxic issues that this plan will have for the
17 Penn Station area.

18 This is not a world class
19 proposal. It's a confusing, compromised proposal.
20 The proposal's remained an unmitigated environmental
21 nightmare especially when you compare them to the
22 many single alternatives that ReThink and other
23 parties have been proposing.

24 The first major flaw in the
25 Governor's proposed real estate focus plan is that

1 it continues to serve the Empire State Development
2 Corporations truly at an off-stated goal of a need
3 to build office towers from river to river in
4 Manhattan. Who decided this? That there's some
5 civic organization that supports that? I'd
6 certainly like to know who they are.

7 Such thinking have executed a plan
8 to destroy all in its path including historic
9 buildings, residences and other aspects of the
10 City's unique character and streetscape.

11 21st-century employers look for a
12 New York character in their buildings, look at the
13 building's Google history and prefer diverse and
14 walkable cities. And no surprise so do New York's
15 residents and many other constituencies. Don't they
16 matter?

17 Second, Penn Station will remain
18 under Madison Square Garden since the late 1960s.

19 The new and improved basement
20 station does not come with a basement price tag. It
21 would cost \$7 billion, substantially more than the
22 oculus train station while possessing all the charm
23 of a Port Authority bus terminal, only worse because
24 it is underground. Don't let the renderings deceive
25 you.

1 This is not built back better. It
2 is '50s style urban renewal as Andrea said earlier.
3 Madison Square Garden can move to Hudson Yards or to
4 any number of other locations. Admittedly, it will
5 always be painful and expensive to move Madison
6 Square Garden, but now is the time.

7 Herein the Governor's plan ignores
8 the prime meet to modernize and convert Penn Station
9 to through running. Inverting to through running
10 would reckon the region the same transformational
11 con activity that happened when the Subways were
12 converted to serve the other boroughs. It is the
13 standard for the international cities domestically
14 and abroad.

15 The suggestions that through
16 running is untenable in Penn Station's current
17 envelope are disingenuous and unfounded. The
18 railroad wants separate pieces of the sandbox. They
19 don't want to play in the sandbox together, but that
20 is what happened successfully in the cities we are
21 talking about that adapted through them. The
22 Governor --

23 THE HEARING OFFICER: 10 second
24 warning, sir.

25 MR. TURVEY: The Governor should

1 follow the science, the same science as virtually
2 all of our competitive international cities have who
3 have implemented through running and which have
4 greatly improved and helped grow the --

5 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you
6 very much for your testimony. You can feel free to
7 email the balance of your testimony to the email
8 address that will appear on the screen at ESD.

9 Our next speaker will be Omri
10 Semadar. My apologies if I didn't pronounce your
11 name correctly.

12 MR. SEMADAR: Okay. My name is
13 Omri and I live on [REDACTED]
14 [REDACTED] and my property is basically a
15 candidate to be demolished and I'm supposed to be
16 displaced from this map.

17 So this revised plan, basically I
18 don't see any community -- real community input.
19 Basically it's the same demolition, it's the same
20 eviction, same imminent -- so I just don't
21 understand how we're at the same spot now with no
22 community input and I just want the politicians to
23 object to this plan and just help us out and
24 repair -- actually maintain our neighborhood and
25 improve -- really make improvements to Penn Station

1 without demolishing the neighborhood. So that's
2 what I have to say. Thank you.

3 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
4 your testimony. Our next speaker will be Brad
5 Vogel. Brad Vogel, if you'd like to -- excuse me --
6 unmute yourself and let us know when you're ready to
7 begin.

8 MR. VOGEL: Yes, thank you. Can
9 you hear me?

10 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

11 MR. VOGEL: Thank you. This plan
12 is an attack on our city and it is an abomination.
13 That is the starting point for my remarks this
14 evening.

15 I would also like to point out who
16 is not here on the Zoom with us:

17 Howard Zemsky;

18 Eric Gertler;

19 Yielder Esher;

20 Cesar Perales;

21 Adrienne Harris;

22 Sherry Glied;

23 And Michael Rozen.

24 Those are the board of the ESD. I
25 do not see them on the Zoom and I ask who in the

1 world are we even testifying to today at this
2 hearing, this extensible hearing? As far as I can
3 tell, this hearing is not in any way valid.

4 I'd like to also do another list
5 for you here. These are people on the website of
6 the ESD who are listed as staff who are also not on
7 tonight:

8 Hope Knight;

9 Kevin Younis;

10 Richard Newman;

11 Rhoda Glickman;

12 Jeff Janiszewski;

13 Ed Hamilton;

14 Elaine Kloss;

15 Pravina Raghavan;

16 Jerome DuVal;

17 Matthew Gorton.

18 The only person that I can find
19 who is actually on tonight is Holly Leicht. But
20 again, I would like to repeat for the record that
21 legally I do not find this to be an adequate or
22 sufficient public hearing in any way and if ESD
23 thinks it's going to get away with this, it had
24 better hold another hearing.

25 It should hold an in-person

1 hearing, so we can actually have engagement with the
2 officials that -- in a very roundabout way because
3 the State has decided to intervene here and
4 supervene control over City zoning. If we are going
5 to have something of this scale that is this
6 destructive, we had better have a legal hearing.

7 Now I just want to go through a
8 few other things. The DEIS itself is dramatically
9 insufficient. This is deeply flawed and it needs to
10 be redone.

11 For one, everyone here tonight is
12 crowing about the fact that all these changes were
13 made. If changes were made, then the DEIS needs to
14 be redone and the public needs a real chance to
15 digest those changes and actually testify about
16 them, not on short notice like tonight. AKA another
17 hearing must be held and it should be held in the
18 new year when there is a new mayor and a new city
19 council who can actually weigh in on this, again,
20 attack to our city.

21 This is not about transit. That
22 is very clear from this plan as several speakers
23 have indicated. The timing is all wrong compared to
24 the various components involved in the site. This
25 is a land grab by a billionaire developer using the

1 state as its stooge and it is a mask -- it is
2 masquerading. It is a pretext for a transit plan.
3 It is not about transit. That is very important for
4 everyone to understand.

5 And there are just many, many
6 things wrong to this, the displacement of residents,
7 the displacement of small businesses, the
8 destruction of multiple national State and City
9 landmark-eligible buildings and the obscene amount
10 of waste in this plan from the embodied carbon and
11 energy in all the buildings.

12 THE HEARING OFFICER: Excuse me --
13 a 10 second warning.

14 MR. VOGEL: Right. Thank you so
15 much. This building -- the DEIS, I just want to
16 point out, fails -- and here's a prime example. It
17 does not even discuss the Gimbel's traverse or sky
18 bridge as a potential --

19 THE HEARING OFFICER: Excuse me.
20 I'm sorry. Please feel free to submit the balance
21 of your testimony to the email address that will
22 appear on the screen periodically.

23 Our next speaker will be Jeffrey
24 Kroessler. Jeffrey Kroessler, if you would like to
25 unmute yourself, you may let us know when you're

1 ready to begin.

2 MR. KROESSLER: Thank you. My
3 name is Jeffrey Kroessler. I'm the President of the
4 City Corporate of New York, founded in 1892 as a
5 good government organization. So we are here
6 testifying to assert that what is being presented
7 here tonight is not good government.

8 And may I also add that Brad Vogel
9 is a member of the preservation committee of the
10 city corp. of New York.

11 New Yorkers are not suckers. We
12 can see through what is being presented. What is
13 here, either there is no plan in place to develop
14 Penn Station and we're being asked to approve a
15 massive upzoning without a plan in place or, more
16 likely, there is a plan that involves the clear
17 cutting of several blocks around Penn Station that
18 we are just not being led in on at the moment.

19 And I believe that clear cutting
20 our city is what is going on because the Hotel
21 Pennsylvania is doomed as we speak. The developer
22 of this is destroying one of the historic resources.

23 One of the buzzwords that I've
24 heard is transit-oriented development. Have any of
25 you looked at the neighborhood around Penn Station?

1 It is the definition of transit-oriented
2 development.

3 Hotel Pennsylvania has 2,200
4 rooms, the largest hotel in the room. That's a --
5 in the world. That was a pretty dense transit
6 center I would say. This plan will call for the
7 demolition of many historic structures and they are
8 invisible in your EIS.

9 I would like to propose that that
10 is illegitimate unless the New York City Landmarks
11 Commission rules that these are not eligible to be
12 landmarks and I don't mean that they determine
13 behind closed doors that it does not meet the
14 standard of designation at this time, which is the
15 letter that everyone gets all the time. I mean in a
16 public hearing. Have them have a public hearing and
17 tell us that the 1872 church designed by Napoleon Le
18 Baron on 30th street does not merit designation.
19 Let them say that.

20 Let them say the Gimbel's
21 Skybridge does not merit it and until we get that
22 public hearing this process is illegitimate and it
23 disrespects our historic city and the City part of
24 the New York.

25 As much we would like to see a

1 great Pennsylvania Station restored and the
2 experience of commuters enhanced, this isn't the
3 plan to do it. This is a --

4 THE HEARING OFFICER: 10 second
5 warning, please. Thank you. Our next speaker will
6 be George Calderaro. While George Calderaro is
7 getting ready to speak, I will let folks know that
8 we will go on a 10-minute break following this next
9 speaker and that will give our ASL interpreters and
10 our transcribe -- our transcriptionist, excuse me, a
11 chance -- a short rest.

12 So our next speaker will be George
13 Calderaro and please let us know when you're ready
14 to begin.

15 (No response.)

16 THE HEARING OFFICER: I'm sorry. I
17 believe that George Calderaro is not present, so our
18 next speaker is T. Lawrence Wheatman. You haven't
19 been shown on the slide yet, but T. Lawrence
20 Wheatman, if you are present, you may unmute
21 yourself and let us know when you're ready to begin.
22 Okay. You're still muted.

23 MR. WHEATMAN: Yes, I had a screen
24 that said the host is not allowing participants to
25 unmute themselves.

1 Good evening. Hi, I'm Lawrence
2 Wheatman. I live on 30th street on the block that
3 would be demolished.

4 I -- my background, you should
5 know I'm born and raised in Manhattan. I've always
6 lived here. I've been living in this neighborhood
7 for almost 50 years, in this my apartment for more
8 than 40 and I have been a volunteer for all of that
9 time and as a matter of fact before that for the
10 City of New York in a number of ways. I won't go
11 into details. I'd be happy to in another occasion.

12 And I -- if this plan were good, I
13 would bite the bullet and step aside for the purpose
14 of allowing an improvement to my neighborhood. This
15 is not an improvement to the neighborhood. This is
16 a -- I'm sorry. I'm going to say the word -- a
17 blatant lie.

18 I've seen the paperwork that led
19 up to getting this proposal to this point and I'm
20 sorry, there is just too many inaccuracies including
21 the photographs of this building from a decade or
22 more ago that said that our -- saying that it needs
23 to be torn down because it's too old or something
24 like that. It's idiotic and ridiculous because the
25 landlord has put millions and millions and millions

1 of dollars into it. It doesn't look anything like
2 the picture that was presented.

3 As I understand that is true to --
4 I mean, the neighborhood is not like that. It was
5 when I moved here. The corner was an incredibly
6 active drug market and this building, Helmsley Spear
7 owned it when I moved in.

8 They didn't care, so they had no
9 locks on the doors. So this building and others
10 around it were the places to go and shoot up or
11 smoke crack or turn tricks or defecate or camp out
12 and start forest -- start fires in the stairways to
13 stay warm in the winter.

14 It was our -- the tenants of the
15 building who funded putting locks into the property
16 with the approval of Helmsley Spear and we paid for
17 that system and an intercom system and that's just
18 one example of how we were responsible for upgrading
19 the neighborhood and to have these blatant lies be
20 part of the testimony that has gotten us this -- you
21 have gotten the proponents of this idea this far, it
22 would mean rewarding lies.

23 I don't think that is fair and my
24 gosh, I could speak for certainly another thirty
25 minutes on this subject, but I think you get the

1 gist of my feelings. Thank you.

2 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
3 your testimony. And so at this time, if we could go
4 back to the slide of the next four speakers. So
5 the -- we are going, at this point, to go on a
6 10-minute break starting at 6:45. We'll go on a
7 break until 6:55 at which point we will reconvene.

8 And at that point, the next four
9 speakers -- Mr. Wheatman has just spoken, so the
10 first four speakers when we return from our break
11 will be:

12 Daniel Kryzhanovski;

13 Eugene Sinigalliano;

14 Jim Wright;

15 And Edward McWilliams.

16 I'll read those once more:

17 Daniel Kryzhanovski;

18 Eugene Sinigalliano;

19 Jim Wright;

20 Edward McWilliams.

21 We will now go on a 10-minute
22 break. We will reconvene at 6:55 p.m. and those --
23 this list will be the first speakers at that time.
24 So thank you. You may stay on the Zoom or you may
25 come back in 10 minutes.

1 (Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

2 THE HEARING OFFICER: And welcome
3 back to our -- excuse me. Welcome back to our
4 public hearing for the Penn Station area
5 redevelopment and the -- excuse me. Okay.

6 We're back. Thank you for the
7 break. As I mentioned it is essential for our ASL
8 interpreter and our transcriptionist to be able to
9 continue to provide very high quality and accessible
10 services throughout this hearing. We will take
11 breaks approximately every one and a half to two
12 hours over the course of this evening.

13 So at this time, we will resume
14 our testimony. I believe that the next speaker who
15 is on our list in registration order is Daniel
16 Kryzhanovski -- excuse me. Daniel Kryzhanovski, if
17 you are present with us and ready to speak, please
18 let us know.

19 MR. KRYZHANOVSKI: Hi. Is it okay
20 if I keep my video off?

21 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes, that's
22 fine. Thank you.

23 MR. KRYZHANOVSKI: Okay. Thank
24 you. So I just -- I have a couple of comment -- I
25 have three things to talk about. The first one is I

1 completely agree with everybody who is just saying
2 that this is an attack on the City.

3 I mean, to all of the Democrats
4 that are supporting this, you know -- which shocked
5 me in itself -- this is already a neighborhood that
6 is vibrant, that is built around transit, that is
7 walkable, that offers, you know, that offers many
8 different kinds of housing. And the fact that you
9 guys think that you're doing something progressive
10 here, some transit-oriented community is just false
11 because it already exists in a much better form than
12 is proposed right here, which is just bland
13 corporate office towers with a transit hub in the
14 middle of it.

15 I mean, you guys are literally
16 destroying the most -- the most iconic, the most
17 integral part of what makes Manhattan special, the
18 reason why people from all over the world come to
19 visit, the reason for why so many businesses choose
20 to settle here. You're destroying that very
21 integral part of this city's identity. You're
22 destroying heritage buildings, which is just
23 inconsolable in the 21st Century.

24 I mean, you would have thought
25 that we would learn from the 20th century that these

1 kinds of demolish and start again schemes are always
2 bad. Like you're turning a vibrant place into
3 something that's just, you know, just a -- basically
4 a place for huge corporations and office blocks.

5 The second thing is that it's
6 really weird that this is the New York State, right?
7 This is New York City and we're being told that in
8 order to restore the station that we've, you know,
9 that's just been failing everyone, we need to give
10 it to a developer in order to, you know, in order to
11 build around it and then that way, we can finance
12 it. I mean, that is just absolutely -- like, I
13 don't even understand how the logic adds up here
14 that in New York City, it's necessary to give over
15 large parcels of real estate in order to fund
16 transit infrastructure, like, that is just
17 absolutely crazy.

18 And the last thing is that instead
19 of doing all of this, instead of destroying amazing
20 neighborhoods and heritage and our vibrant city,
21 maybe instead of that, just maybe, we should rebuild
22 the original Penn Station that was beautiful and
23 that way we can right a historic wrong. It was a
24 huge station. It conserved today's 21st century
25 needs. It has amazing capacity. Maybe we should

1 rebuild that instead of demolishing even more
2 buildings after we made that mistake in the '60s,
3 demolishing one of the most beautiful stations in
4 the world.

5 The last thing is just think about
6 the people and let me tell you if you show this to
7 anyone, almost every single person that lives in New
8 York would be against it.

9 THE HEARING OFFICER: 15 seconds.

10 MR. KRYZHANOVSKI: And you guys are
11 the government. You guys should be serving the
12 people, not your real estate plans. Thank you very
13 much.

14 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
15 your testimony. Our next speaker will be Eugene
16 Sinigalliano. Eugene Sinigalliano, if you could
17 please unmute yourself and let us know when you're
18 ready to speak.

19 MR. SINIGALLIANO: Hi, I'm ready.
20 My name is Eugene Sinigalliano. I'm a
21 rent-stabilized senior and the only
22 at-risk-of-displacement resident that Empire State
23 Development had on their Community Advisory
24 Committee Working Group.

25 ESD's revised Penn proposal has

1 improvements to the horrible original GPP, but
2 massive displacement, loss of historic significant
3 buildings and destruction of an entire community are
4 still there. Hundred of residents, 400 businesses
5 and 10,000 jobs will be displaced with almost two
6 full city blocks destroyed by ESD's proposed
7 southern expansion alternative.

8 These residents and businesses
9 rely on the affordable rent in our vibrant working
10 class at scale neighborhood, but ESD is using a
11 completely outdated and inaccurate neighborhood
12 condition study to portray our buildings in poor
13 condition to justify why they should be torn down.
14 This is totally false and many buildings have
15 undergone multimillion dollar modernizations over
16 the past few years.

17 The six rent-stabilized families
18 in just my building have lived here for over
19 40 years, yet the \$40 billion Penn Station proposal
20 does not even protect displaced residents or
21 businesses and will rob senior families of their
22 legal New York rent stabilization by using a federal
23 authority to do the condemnation of the buildings.

24 ESD did not even adopt the
25 protective language for displaced businesses and

1 residents that their own advisory working group
2 recommended in ESD's proposed revisions. New York
3 deserves a much better Penn improvement plan that
4 respects and protects our homes, businesses,
5 community and is responsible to the taxpayers who
6 will have to pay for it.

7 There are already far better plans
8 that should be fully explored, which would create a
9 unified regional rail network and transform Penn
10 Station into a modern through running aboveground
11 station without massive displacement and misery. A
12 better plan would be economically responsible and
13 not count on risky financing schemes and PILOTs who
14 intend to use sky towers with no guarantee or
15 certainty of ever paying the 40 billion this
16 terrible plan will cost.

17 The southern expansion is a land
18 grab disguised as transit improvement, which
19 provides a little more than a new stub-in base-in
20 station without any possibility of through running
21 'till 2080. All this happens with no control
22 allowed to New York City government or their much
23 more transparent ULURP process.

24 The pandemic saw midtown Manhattan
25 lose hundreds of commercial tenants, leaving empty

1 skyscrapers with millions of square feet of empty
2 office space, the highest vacancy rate since 1994.
3 At the same time, we suffer from an affordable
4 housing crisis. So why does it make sense to
5 bulldoze a working class neighborhood that includes
6 affordable and rent-stabilized housing? It does
7 not. The short answer is it just doesn't.

8 Penn Station plan is not good for
9 our families, our community or anyone else except
10 those like big real estate that have special
11 interest in profiting from it. Thank you.

12 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
13 your testimony. Our next speaker will be Jim
14 Wright. Jim Wright, please unmute yourself and let
15 us know when you're ready to speak. Jim Wright,
16 please let us know if you're on the call and ready
17 to speak.

18 (No response.)

19 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay Jim
20 Wright, we'll need to move onto the next speaker for
21 now. If you'd like to try again later, you may
22 raise your hand and be added back to the list.

23 Our next speaker will be Edward
24 McWilliams. Edward McWilliams, please unmute
25 yourself and you may begin when you're ready.

1 MR. MCWILLIAMS: Hello. My name is
2 Ed -- can you hear me?

3 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

4 MR. MCWILLIAMS: How do you do? My
5 name is Edward McWilliams. I'm the Executive
6 Director with the New York City District Council of
7 Carpenters and I'd like to speak tonight in full
8 support -- with strong support for the Penn Station
9 Project Plan.

10 As a commuter myself and as so
11 many of our members, for over 46 years, I've been
12 commuting through Penn Station. It's a dark, dirty
13 and dismal atmosphere. There should be no argument
14 that as an international city, New York City merits
15 a world class transportation pub akin to the global
16 stature that it deserves. We applaud the
17 progressive and innovative leadership that is
18 driving the Penn Station General Project forward.

19 At a time when New York City is in
20 an economic recovery due to this recent Covid
21 pandemic, such a project can be the catalyst that we
22 need to jump start our economy. We strongly support
23 this bold and forward thinking project to revitalize
24 Penn Station and subsequently the entire City.
25 Thank you.

1 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
2 your testimony. Our next speaker -- we have a new
3 list of speakers. I'll read all of them out. We
4 have:

5 John Mudd;

6 Rachael Fauss;

7 Roberta Gelb I believe spoke
8 earlier and so we will move to the next speaker:

9 Santos Rodriguez;

10 And Lynn Ellsworth.

11 So the next set of speakers will
12 be:

13 John Mudd;

14 Rachael Fauss;

15 Santos Rodriguez;

16 And Lynn Ellsworth.

17 And I believe word is that John
18 Mudd is not present, so we will move to Rachael
19 Fauss. Rachael Fauss, if you can unmute yourself,
20 please and let us know when you're ready to speak.

21 MS. FAUSS: Hi, can you hear me?

22 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

23 MS. FAUSS: Perfect. Thank you.

24 Good evening. My name is Rachael Fauss and I'm the
25 Senior Research Analyst for Reinvent Albany.

1 Reinvent Albany advocates for transparent,
2 accountable New York State government.

3 Today's hearing is focused on the
4 Penn Station General Project Plan, GPP, but we
5 strongly urge Governor Hochul and Empire State
6 Development Corporation, ESD, to look beyond the
7 limited frame of the GPP and be truly transparent
8 about who exactly will pay for this project and what
9 assumptions ESD is making.

10 We, again, ask that the Hochul
11 administration provide the public with complete
12 information, so taxpayers can properly evaluate the
13 Penn Station area project's financing, return on
14 investment, risks and potential impacts on the state
15 and city budget.

16 We appreciate that ESD posted
17 additional project materials on the website albeit
18 only this week. However, these documents are only a
19 subset of materials given to the Community Advisory
20 Committee.

21 All of the CAC materials should be
22 published online. ESD should also publish all
23 analyses conducted by Ernst and Young under the
24 \$600,000 contract approved by ESD as requested by
25 Rockshaw (phonetic) Group.

1 Turning to the GPP, ESD stated in
2 a July 2021 town hall that the goal of the GPP is
3 "to establish a financial framework to generate
4 revenue to help fund the reconstruction and
5 expansion of Penn Station and other improvements."

6 However, the GPP simply does not
7 provide sufficient detail or evidence to support
8 ESD's claim that the revenue from the development is
9 essential to funding Penn Station upgrades or will
10 be a good return on public investment for the
11 potential massive subsidies in the form of tax
12 abatements to Vornado, the developer.

13 Given the lack of financial
14 details in the GPP, why is ESD so confident about
15 gambling billions of state taxpayer dollars? What
16 does ESD know that they have not shared? We strongly
17 suspect the math doesn't add up for this project and
18 it will be a huge giveaway to Vornado under which
19 the City government either loses existing or
20 potential tax revenues and state taxpayers have to
21 bail out borrowing for the new Penn Station. That is
22 exactly what happened just blocks away in Hudson
23 Yards.

24 Given these concerns, we have a
25 number of questions that we believe must be answered

1 before ESD and the public can sign off on this
2 project, which I'll also note there's written
3 testimony of on our website

4 First how much money does ESD
5 actually project that a value-capture framework
6 would provide? What is the expected interest rate
7 and credit rating on bonds for these proceeds? How
8 much money does New York State expect to pay? In
9 what budget years and over what period of time? What
10 is the worst case scenario if the development
11 revenues do not come in as anticipated? How much
12 could New York State taxpayers be expected to pay?
13 Why exactly can't this project go through ULURP?
14 Why is the GPP progressing ahead of the MTA's Master
15 Plan?

16 THE HEARING OFFICER: 15 second
17 warning.

18 MS. FAUSS: Lastly, if ESD doesn't
19 intend to -- and the State don't intend to move MSG,
20 what is the plan for MSG's tax abatement? Thank
21 you.

22 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
23 your testimony. Our next speaker -- so I'll -- I'm
24 going to briefly go back and call on John Mudd. If
25 we have a John Mudd, please let us know, so we can

1 give you your chance to speak.

2 (No response.)

3 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay and then
4 Roberta Gelb has acknowledged that she spoke
5 earlier, so our next speaker will be Santos
6 Rodriguez. Santos Rodriguez -- yup, you can go
7 ahead and start when you're ready.

8 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you very
9 much. Good evening. I am Santos Rodriguez. I'm
10 here to testify on behalf of Gary LaBarbera,
11 President of the Building and Construction Trades
12 Council of Greater New York and Vicinity. I am here
13 to testify in support of the Pennsylvania Station
14 area civic and land use project.

15 The Building and Construction
16 Trades Council is an organization of local building
17 and construction trades unions that are affiliated
18 with 15 international unions and the North American
19 building trades unions. Our local union affiliates
20 represent approximately 100,000 union construction
21 workers.

22 The Building and Trade's mission
23 is to raise the standards for living for all workers
24 to advocate for safe working conditions and
25 collectively advanced working conditions for our

1 affiliate members as well as all workers in New
2 York. The Pennsylvania Station Project will
3 increase safety and security, making it easier for
4 passengers to navigate through the station and
5 connect to their destination and consolidate support
6 functions.

7 All will incorporate new entrances
8 and access points as well as enhancing the
9 surrounding streetscape, address open space and
10 pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular circulation.
11 Unplanned improvement is a below grade east, west
12 corridor between 34th Street and Penn -- and Penn to
13 34th street Herald Square subway station. The
14 project will also improve the city's transportation
15 infrastructure by creating new stations, entrances,
16 new stairways, riding in existing stairways and
17 increasing platform capacity in Penn Station by
18 about 40 percent.

19 Additionally, the project will
20 result in development over 10 new buildings and 8
21 development -- on 8 development sites in the
22 project's area in new public plaza. It will
23 generate approximately 20 million gross square feet
24 in class A commercial, office, retail, hotel and
25 potential residential space.

1 This will create substantial
2 numbers of construction jobs that will allow workers
3 to obtain fair and sustaining wages and benefits.
4 This comprehensive plan initiative that would
5 revitalize the entire area around Penn Station, the
6 Building and Construction Trades Council of the
7 Greater New York and Vicinity supports the Penn
8 Station area project and the projects like this that
9 will revitalize and modernize our city, improve our
10 transportation and create middle class jobs for our
11 members in the process.

12 We thank you again for the
13 opportunity to testify in support of this project.
14 Thank you.

15 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
16 your testimony. Our next speaker will be Lynn
17 Ellsworth. Lynn Ellsworth, please unmute yourself
18 and let us know when you're ready to begin.

19 MS. ELLSWORTH: Am I unmuted?

20 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes, I can
21 hear you.

22 MS. ELLSWORTH: Okay. My name is
23 Lynn Ellsworth. I am the coordinator of the Empire
24 Station Coalition, which is composed of the Ad Hock
25 Penn Area Residence and Small Business Committee,

1 the 29th Street Association, Limited Equity at Penn
2 South, the Midtown South Community Council, the
3 Murry Hill Neighborhood Association, Save Chelsea,
4 The Council of Chelsea Block Associations, The
5 Historic Districts Council, The Victorian Society,
6 The Congress for New Urbanism's New York City
7 Chapter, The City Club of New York, The
8 Environmental Simulation Center, TakeBackNYC,
9 ReThinkNYC and the Alliance For a Human-Scale City.

10 Our comments, one, the feedback
11 and planning process the Empire State Development
12 Corporation has followed has been biased and
13 undemocratic. They have relied on a fake
14 participatory approach with big real estate
15 dominating the advisory council and an [Zoom
16 inaudible] curated membership that operated in
17 secrecy.

18 Two, the benefits to this project
19 are elusory. They read like a trumped-up press
20 release from the master of devil speak from 1984.
21 The benefits are massively exaggerated. All of them
22 could be achieved through other means without
23 building towers for Vornado.

24 The affordable housing offered is
25 not a magic phrase that makes expanding Hudson Yards

1 into the Penn neighborhood something that is
2 worthwhile to the City. Neither is the
3 pedestrianization of a street to create pseudo open
4 space a credible justification. That street will
5 just lie in permanent darkness anyway from the
6 shadow impact of the towers.

7 Three, the process has thus far
8 ignored the cheaper and superior alternative. That
9 is to create a regional unified train network
10 anchored in a through running train station. It
11 will build a new aboveground station inspired by the
12 former station that was demolished years ago. The
13 alternative would raise regional GDP and incomes in
14 an equitable way instead of concentrating wealth in
15 the hands of Vornado and Related.

16 I note that Related CEO has not
17 paid federal taxes in 10 years, a fact that makes us
18 wonder why there is so much political bowing and
19 scraping to the real estate lobby in this particular
20 situation.

21 And fourth, the damage to the City
22 is just too great here. The demolition, the
23 displacement of residents, the destruction of
24 historic fabric, the loss of small businesses and
25 their jobs and an ill-designed expansion of Hudson

1 Yards. It is time we stop selling off the entire
2 skydome of Manhattan to big real estate for their
3 toxic visions that do not benefit the common good.

4 And last, I just want to throw in
5 there for all the unions who are in the audience, if
6 you think Vornado is going to hire union labor on
7 their 10 towers, I've got a bridge to sell you.
8 Thank you very much.

9 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you.
10 Our next speaker will be Max Scott, but before that
11 I would also read the next five speakers. We'll
12 have:

13 Max Scott;
14 Then K.C. McLeod;
15 Then Andrew Cronson;
16 Lorna Nowve;
17 And Sean Champion.

18 So Max Scott, if you'd like to
19 unmute yourself and begin when you're ready.

20 MR. SCOTT: Yeah. Can I keep my
21 video off? Is that all right?

22 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

23 MR. SCOTT: Okay. Cool. Thanks.
24 Okay. So I'm kind of going off of what everybody
25 said. This is a terrible plan. Everyone here wants

1 a modern Penn Station, right? Everyone agrees on
2 that, but this current plan is bad in every single
3 way compared to the alternatives.

4 There is an alternative if you go
5 to rethinkpennstationnyc.org. Go there and look at
6 what the alternative for Penn Station could look
7 like.

8 This plan, the Empire Station --
9 the Empire Station complex plan, it's bad transit
10 planning, it's bad urban planning, it's bad city
11 planning. It'll be worst for the environment than
12 the alternative. It's bad for historic preservation.

13 It's tearing down a beautiful old
14 historic neighborhood and tons of buildings that are
15 landmarks for New York and it's a more expensive
16 plan. There's a cheaper plan if you go to
17 rethinkpennstationnyc.org.

18 And to all the union people out
19 there too, we want union jobs. Union jobs are
20 great. We want to hire union workers. Unions are
21 amazing. We just have a better plan that will still
22 be able to hire union jobs and even might make union
23 jobs because this plan involves potentially
24 rebuilding the old Penn Station, which was beautiful
25 old historic station that was torn down and everyone

1 agrees was a terrible loss for New York. We don't
2 need this 1950s-style Robert Moses urban-renewal
3 wholesale destruction of a neighborhood.

4 There are people here, there is a
5 community here, there is history here and the
6 adaptive reuse. Look just one block east of Herald
7 Square. They've completely re -- there's a company
8 that's renovating an old hotel that's just as
9 beautiful as the Hotel Pennsylvania a block away and
10 it will be an amazing win for New York City. We can
11 do the exact same thing one block to the west.
12 Thank you.

13 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
14 your testimony. Our next speaker will be K.C.
15 McLeod. K.C. McLeod, please unmute yourself and you
16 may begin when you're ready.

17 MR. MCLEOD: Hi. Thank you very
18 much for the opportunity to speak. I know a lot of
19 people do want to weigh in on this, so I will keep
20 my comments as concise as possible.

21 Looking at this plan, obviously
22 Penn Station requires a lot of work to be done. I
23 think that there are good ideas being suggested when
24 it comes to the transit center itself.

25 However, looking at this structure

1 being built around it, I think it is an incredibly
2 misguided strategy that is focusing almost entirely
3 on commercial real estate.

4 Before the pandemic at the end of
5 2019, the office vacant -- the commercial real
6 estate vacancy rate in New York was about 7 and a
7 half percent. As of last month, it is now 18
8 percent. Meanwhile the residential vacancy rate in
9 New York City was only 1.8 percent before the
10 pandemic and is a whopping 2.2 percent right now.
11 This city clearly needs more opportunities for
12 people to live here, not for offices.

13 There's a plane that exists.
14 There's also a larger buffer for if the office
15 crunch does come upon us at some point, which seems
16 unlikely. I think we need to focus on where are
17 people going to live. We talk about all these
18 amenities that are going to exist, but who is going
19 to be able to come and experience them? Thank you
20 very much.

21 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
22 your testimony. Our next speaker will be Andrew
23 Cronson. Andrew Cronson, you may unmute yourself
24 and let us know when you're ready to begin.

25 MR. CRONSON: Hopefully you can see

1 me and hear me.

2 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

3 MR. CRONSON: Okay. Thank you. My
4 name is Andrew Cronson and I am involved with the
5 Empire Station Coalition. As someone [REDACTED],
6 I never got to see the original Penn Station, which
7 I'm told is one of the grandest public buildings
8 ever built.

9 While I was a commuter at H Data
10 NYU, not a moment went by without profound
11 disappointment with what was inherited in the place
12 of a masterpiece under the same widely discredited
13 urban renewal. This is not a demolition of what
14 little bit is left of the historic Penn Station
15 area. As if once wasn't enough, you want to fund
16 some elusory improvements that will evict both
17 residents and tenants by the hundreds and demolish
18 entire blocks of the City in the process.

19 The bona fide historic buildings
20 on the project site are deemed as blighted, but not
21 due to a function or inability to be utilized as
22 they are still in use or recently were. There is a
23 bit of soot, but nothing beyond rehabilitation to
24 productive and profitable 21st century uses. These
25 buildings are the works of some of the more --

1 foremost architects in history like McKim, Mead and
2 White; Shreve and Lang; and Daniel Burnham

3 The current environmental
4 mitigation plans for these buildings are recreation
5 and some architectural salvage is close to useless
6 at best. The most sustainable building is the one
7 that is already standing. In fact, the Pritzker
8 price, the noble price for architecture this year,
9 was given to a firm that has never demolished a
10 building they encountered. They see it for what it
11 is, an act of cultural vandalism that can never be
12 undone.

13 On behalf of the many young people
14 who care about preservation now and the countless
15 future generations who will inherit the consequence
16 of this horrendous undemocratic project, all I can
17 say is that it does not go unnoticed. This plan is
18 a true disgrace. Visionaries like Jane Jacobs and
19 [Zoom inaudible] should be rolling in their graves.
20 I most emphatically suggest that no action be taken
21 at this time and this plan, in its current form, be
22 relegated to [Zoom inaudible] history.

23 The entirety of New York City's
24 public deserves so much better and superior
25 improvements to Penn Station by implementing through

1 running trains, relocating Madison Square Garden --
2 and its lease expires soon -- rebuilding the
3 functional aboveground Penn Station in the manner of
4 the old one are an excellent place to start.

5 To build a better future for all
6 New Yorkers, you must look to the past. Thank you
7 very much.

8 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
9 your testimony. Our next speaker will be Lorna
10 Nowve or Nove (phonetic). Lorna Nowve, if you ready
11 to speak, please unmute yourself.

12 MS. NOWVE: Okay, I'm trying. Hi,
13 can you hear me?

14 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes, we can.

15 MS. NOWVE: Great. I'm Lorna
16 Nowve, the Interim Executive Director of the
17 Historic Districts Council, the City-wide advocate
18 for New York historic neighborhoods. This proposal
19 is a lost opportunity to preserve and protect a
20 vital part of the City's landscape while commuting a
21 state of-the-art train station. These goals are not
22 mutually exclusive. A revised plan incorporating
23 the area's rich architectural texture into a 21st
24 century transit center will demonstrate that the New
25 York can honor the past while planning for its

1 future.

2 This proposal reminds us of a
3 misguided 1950s era urban renewal project. Haven't
4 we learned from mistakes of the past? "Don't tear
5 it down" was a familiar battle cry at a time when
6 wholesale destruction of intact neighborhoods was
7 happening throughout the City. The fact that this
8 chant is finding its way into public discourse again
9 should be a wake up call.

10 Over 35 buildings in the area have
11 been identified in the draft EIS as being worthy of
12 state or national landmark recognition. Ten of them
13 could be eligible for New York City landmark
14 designation.

15 In August 2021, the working group
16 called for efforts to preserve -- to try to preserve
17 the area's historic resources by incorporating them
18 into the new design. Specifically, the Penn Station
19 Powerhouse, St. John the Baptist Church and the
20 Gimbel's Bridge. Their list also includes the Hotel
21 Pennsylvania, which we've been told will take two
22 years to demolish.

23 These streets are lined with
24 independent businesses that contribute to the
25 economic health of the City. Thousands of New

1 Yorkers live and work in the area. Once displaced,
2 they will have no place to go. A development on the
3 scale of Hudson Yards is an affront to those who
4 love this city.

5 While no one can predict if and
6 when the demand for new office space will match or
7 exceed pre-pandemic levels, it's foolhardy to go
8 forward with a plan created before the rise of the
9 work-from-home culture.

10 Photographs of the demolition of
11 the Hotel Pennsylvania will echo those devastating
12 images of the destruction of the original Penn
13 Station. Is this how we want to document the future
14 of our city? Thank you.

15 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
16 your testimony. Our next speaker will be Sean
17 Campion. Sean Champion, you may unmute yourself and
18 let us know what you're ready to begin.

19 MR. CAMPION: Hi, thank you. Can
20 you hear me?

21 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

22 MR. CAMPION: Thank you. I'm Sean
23 Campion, Senior Research Associate at the Citizens
24 Budget Commission, a nonpartisan, nonprofit think
25 tank and watchdog devoted to construction --

1 constructive change in finances, services and
2 policies of New York City and New York State. Our
3 full written testimony can be found on our website
4 CBCNY.org. I want to give some of the highlights of
5 what we've submitted.

6 So Penn station area GPP is an
7 ambitious proposal that will create a new zoning
8 framework to catalyze development of Penn Station
9 area with developers also funding or building public
10 realm improvement such as plazas, open spaces,
11 widened sidewalks, new subway entrances and
12 renovated subway stations.

13 This new development would also
14 generate recurring revenue that ESD would use to
15 finance the renovation of Penn Station while holding
16 the city fiscally harmless. These projects can
17 provide significant benefits to commuters, New York
18 City residents and the economy.

19 New York City is the engine that
20 powers the regional economy and there's no location
21 more appropriate for commercial development than the
22 area around Penn Station, the nation's busiest rail
23 hub. Likewise, improving rail service at Penn
24 Station will enhance mobility, access to jobs and
25 quality of life for residents and commuters alike.

1 In its current form, however, the
2 plan leaves unanswered questions about the State's
3 proposal to use the value created by a rezoning to
4 finance the renovation and potential expansion of
5 Penn Station and to capture property tax revenue
6 from the City without the City's approval.

7 The State has provided high-level
8 information about how the value capture plan would
9 work, but many important details have not yet been
10 presented or determined. Currently available
11 information simply does not allow us to evaluate the
12 appropriateness of the project financing plan.

13 I'd like to draw attention to five
14 questions that we identify in our testimony that
15 should be answered before the project moves forward.

16 First, what is the scope of
17 capital improvements and what is the estimated cost
18 of each phase? So the GPP doesn't provide a scope
19 of work cost average for the proposed capital
20 projects. Without more detail, it's difficult to
21 assess whether the project would achieve its goals
22 and achieve them in the most cost-effective manner.

23 Second, how much of the project
24 would New York State fund and what portion of that
25 would be funded through value capture?

1 Third, how would the financing
2 plan work? So the plan doesn't have information on
3 how the plan would be structured including the types
4 of revenue to be captured, how much we raised, how
5 and whether the City would be held harmless, how the
6 funds would be used and how ESD would handle the
7 risk associated with timing, cost overruns and [Zoom
8 inaudible] short falls.

9 Fourth, what is the
10 decision-making role of the City of New York and
11 what are the revenue impacts on the city? The GPP
12 would divert property tax revenue from privately
13 owned and occupied parcels in redevelopment areas,
14 which would exceed ESD's authority beyond how it's
15 used in the past and we think the City should have a
16 role to play in how the City's tax revenue is used.

17 Finally, whether it's appropriate
18 to divert property tax revenue generated by new
19 development to finance transportation improvements
20 and whether that's the best financing strategy.

21 In conclusion, they've done well
22 to contribute to good wellbeing and we urge everyone
23 to work together to achieve a plan that works for
24 everyone. Thank you.

25 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for

1 your testimony. At this time, the time is 7:29 and
2 our -- the option to sign up to speak and provide
3 testimony during this hearing will end at 7:30. If
4 you have not yet signed up to speak, but you would
5 like to speak, please raise your hand via Zoom or if
6 you are joining us by phone, please -- I see we have
7 18 new participants who have raised their hands --
8 or if you are joining us by phone, you may dial *9
9 on your keypad to be added to the list to speak.

10 At this point, if you have already
11 raised your hand earlier in the meeting or if you
12 registered -- if you signed up to speak when you
13 registered and entered the meeting, your name is
14 already on our list. While -- at this time -- in
15 just a moment, I will also call on registered
16 speakers who were not present or didn't respond when
17 we called on them just to see if they're here and if
18 they'd like to raise their hand to also be added to
19 the list.

20 So the following speakers -- I'm
21 sorry. Yes, the following registered speakers were
22 not present when their name was called, so they can
23 be -- if you'd like -- if you are here now and you
24 hear your name, you may raise your hand to still be
25 added to the list. Mike Kavanagh, George Haikalis,

1 Christine Berthet, Jeffrey LeFrancois, George
2 Calderaro, Jim Wright and John Mudd.

3 You may at this time use the raise
4 hand function on Zoom, which is showing on your
5 screen now or dial *9 on your keypad if you're
6 joining by phone and we will receive a message or
7 we'll add your name or the first and last three
8 digits of your phone number to the end of the
9 speaker list.

10 All speakers have now been added
11 to the list. I will let folks know that we have an
12 extensive list of speakers this evening. Please if
13 you definitely want to speak, bear with us until
14 your name is called and you see your name on the
15 upcoming next five speakers, but I will let folks
16 know that we -- this is a very -- providing
17 testimony in this hearing is a very popular activity
18 this evening and we do anticipate that we will be
19 here hearing testimony for a number of -- for
20 several more hours.

21 We will go past 8:00 with no
22 problem, but we are ending the opportunity to add
23 your name to the speakers list at this time, but if
24 you have added your name -- if you have registered
25 or let us know that you want to speak, you will have

1 an opportunity to speak this evening and have your
2 testimony heard and recorded. Okay. Thank you all
3 very much.

4 If you have raised you hand, we
5 have added you to the list at this time and so we'll
6 go back to our testimony -- to our next five
7 speakers. Excuse me. I do believe -- we do have
8 one speaker from earlier who missed their name, John
9 Mudd, so we will give John Mudd an opportunity to
10 speak at this time and then we'll move back to the
11 list of the next five speakers.

12 John Mudd, if you are -- if you
13 can please unmute yourself and let us know when you
14 are ready to speak

15 MR. MUDD: I have. Thank you,
16 Celeste. This is John Mudd, midtown south community
17 council and I just want to get just a couple of
18 points off. What we're saying that's happening with
19 this development, you can dress -- by the way you
20 can dress this up as, you know, development,
21 economic development, but we -- I think most of us
22 know exactly what's going on here. This is pure
23 wealth extraction is what's happening here. You
24 offer some silly 421A tax abatement for affordable
25 housing, which -- that's a whole other story.

1 That's a scam in itself.

2 But everyone that even gets
3 somewhat of an idea of what this is about is against
4 it. It creates the homelessness and housing crisis.
5 All you have to do is look towards the hotel
6 development that started in midtown that spread out
7 over the city. They cost a lot of tenant buildings
8 and created homelessness and, you know, didn't offer
9 any kind of housing.

10 You got the Hudson Yards, another
11 example -- and there's plenty of examples, I mean,
12 you know, in our past, but these two examples are
13 just not far off. So anyone who just takes these
14 two projects in can understand what they're doing
15 here and they pretty much say it in their propose --
16 in their meetings and so forth. They want to
17 develop a business to business district. Why do we
18 want these homogenized glass towers from one end to
19 the other and it does nothing for our city? I mean,
20 you can see it downtown, you can see it all over
21 downtown in the financial district and it's just not
22 appealing and it's just not gonna -- it's not very
23 exciting for anyone to come and visit and see.

24 And that's all I'll have to say,
25 but it's an existential crisis and we need -- and if

1 they -- if the development can't include a balance
2 of affordable housing, real affordable housing, it
3 has no business happening. We can't continue this
4 way. This -- we just can't continue this way and I
5 hope everyone sees this. I know everyone sees this
6 if they get the information, you know, it's the --
7 the developers are pushing that. We know -- we know
8 they have a tremendous grip on the City and there's
9 nothing here for the citizens or for even people
10 venturing here to see the City and I'll stop there.

11 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
12 your testimony. Our -- the list of the next five
13 speakers will be Barry Caro or Caroe (phonetic),
14 Stephen Marmon, Alison Greenberg, Fern Luskin and
15 Michael Bournas-Nay

16 And the first speaker on our list
17 will be Barry Caro. If you'd like to unmute
18 yourself and begin when you're ready.

19 MR. CARO: Great. Can everyone
20 hear me?

21 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

22 MR. CARO: Great. So my name is
23 Barry Caro. I'm here on behalf of ReThinkNYC
24 tonight and I'm here to urge this body to properly
25 and fairly consider through running at Penn

1 Station's alternative means of adding capacity to a
2 regional rail system instead of the proposed Penn
3 south expansion. There is no need to expand Penn
4 Station because the station is big enough to serve
5 four tunnels in each direction within its current
6 boundaries if it is reconfigured to maximize stair
7 width.

8 The planning for the aboveground
9 station should not and cannot be separated from
10 transit operations. Transit operations determine
11 the needs in the area as a whole. The real capacity
12 constraints that exist at Penn Station today are a
13 result of using the station as a commuter rail
14 terminal and turning trains around at the most
15 congested point on commuter tracks in America. It
16 takes forever, contributes to a miserable customer
17 experience in the station and creates systemwide
18 delays.

19 By contrast, through running means
20 having trains continue in the same direction to a
21 destination on the opposite side of the metropolitan
22 area. For example, allowing a train from Trenton to
23 go to Ronkonkoma or Stanford. The first gentlemen
24 from the public to speak tonight talked about making
25 that trip as a transfer. We're talking about making

1 it on one train. As we demonstrated in our
2 presentation to the community action working group,
3 this clears up sufficient capacity in Penn Station
4 itself to serve the existing tunnels plus the
5 gateway tunnels as well as opening up a world of new
6 opportunities across our region.

7 Now through running is the modern
8 standard across the world. While the planning
9 process has paid lip service to this idea, there has
10 been an effort to make it seem as if through running
11 will allow slightly fewer trains to run than the
12 MTA's preferred option. The difference was 24 to
13 22.

14 We disagree, but we also note that
15 even using the MTA's own flawed math, the underlying
16 idea of through running is so sound that the worst
17 that can be said about it is that it costs much
18 less, 75 percent less, and provides effectively the
19 same level of service at Penn Station while
20 providing major benefits to outlying areas that a
21 new terminal cannot. By definition, building more
22 in Manhattan cannot help outlying areas.

23 Using more realistic assumptions,
24 through running provides a significant capacity
25 boost that completely eliminates the need to build

1 the most expensive train station in the world next
2 to Penn Station. The MTA must study our actual
3 through running proposal in this process alongside
4 their own. Please do not underestimate how
5 transformative it would be for suburban job centers
6 and secondary business districts like Newark or
7 Jamaica to have easy access to millions more
8 potential workers and customers. The whole New York
9 --

10 THE HEARING OFFICER: 15 second
11 warning, sir.

12 MR. CARO: The whole New York
13 region deserves a world class transit system, not
14 more of the same. Thank you.

15 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
16 your testimony. Our next speaker -- sorry -- I
17 believe will be Stephen Mormon. Yes, thank you.
18 Stephen or Stefan Mormon, if you are ready to speak,
19 please unmute yourself and let us know.

20 MR. MORMON: I am. My name is
21 Stephen J. Mormon. I am a Native New Yorker who
22 took numerous trains from the original Penn Station.
23 As one who covered both Amtrak and mass transit for
24 the New York Times and Money Magazine, I have
25 considerable experience in this matter. I strongly

1 oppose the GPP and the draft EIS. Both documents
2 are fatally flawed in the following areas.

3 Number one, the plan and the EIS
4 are fatally flawed by failing to consider the
5 movement of Madison Square Garden, which is at the
6 heart of the area under consideration. By keeping
7 the Garden where it currently is, that makes an
8 aboveground station impossible among the main
9 section of the tracks. An aboveground station is
10 critical to a high quality commuting and transit
11 experience. MSG must be moved, essentially given
12 the fact that its operating license from the City of
13 New York is scheduled to expire in just two years.

14 While there are several sites for
15 a new Madison Square Garden, the plan also fatally
16 fails to include the eastern end of Block 809 at
17 34th and 6th Avenue, which as several studies have
18 shown provides the best site for a new garden
19 perfectly located in a high-density area that has
20 mass transit including the PATH lines.

21 Two, through running. As Barry
22 Caro just clearly pointed out, the documents do not
23 recognize the detailed plans developed by his group
24 and others, provide for effective revisions to
25 tracks 1 and 2 currently used mainly by New Jersey

1 transit that will enable both of those tracks to
2 connect to the eastern track fan that leads to the
3 East River tunnels.

4 In addition, the far northern
5 tracks can also be connected to the current existing
6 western track theme. By doing this in conjunction
7 with widening the platforms, the existing tracks
8 will be able to handle both the now existing and the
9 expanding traffic from the future even after the new
10 tunnels under the Hudson open and the current
11 tunnels are renovated.

12 I urge that a further
13 consideration be given to the concept of rebuilding
14 the original Penn Station in a modernized form after
15 the Garden has been moved to a new and better
16 location at Herald Square. Thank you very much.

17 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
18 your testimony. Our next speaker will be Alison
19 Greenberg. Alison Greenberg, feel free to unmute
20 yourself and let us know when you're ready.

21 MS. GREENBERG: Thank you. I'm
22 ready. Hi, my name is Alison Greenberg. I am a New
23 York City resident and law practice owner who worked
24 on 34th Street for years. I am very familiar with
25 the site area.

1 Governor Hochul and members of the
2 Economic Development Corporation, please do not go
3 forward with this plan. The area surrounding Penn
4 Station is not a slum and this project will not
5 resolve the homeless crisis that clearly exists
6 throughout the City. There are better ways to
7 address what you refer to in the EIS as "insanitary
8 conditions."

9 This is a place of viable
10 businesses that survived a pandemic. It is a place
11 where people live and go to work each day. It is a
12 part of what makes New York City eclectic. It is
13 gotham. This site area is worth visiting and living
14 in. Don't destroy this place particularly not under
15 the label of development.

16 Proceeding with this plan as it is
17 even with the minor changes requested by the
18 Governor will lead to a destruction of small
19 businesses and homes of New York City residents.
20 How is this development? How is this so-called
21 process democratic when the EDC will dramatically
22 disrupt and destroy businesses and homes and not go
23 through the standard ULURP process.

24 There are many buildings that
25 merit designation by the Landmarks Preservation

1 Commission and we want the LPC to hold hearings
2 about their considerations for the site area
3 buildings. Decision making behind the scenes is not
4 acceptable in a democracy. Do any of the ECD (sic)
5 representatives even live or own businesses in the
6 site area? The people of this city who live and
7 operate businesses do not deserve to be shut down,
8 evicted and ruined. This is what the EDC and
9 Governor Hochul will accomplish with this plan.

10 How is the demolition of sturdy,
11 massive buildings of concrete, brick, stone, glass,
12 metal and terracotta acceptable in the name of
13 economic development?

14 How can you proceed with
15 demolition of homes and businesses to build
16 science-fiction-like glass office towers when people
17 want to continue to work productively from home?
18 The market does not support this plan.

19 From a moral standpoint, how can
20 you push forward this plan? A plan that will
21 destroy, demolish and evict? How can you support a
22 plan that will significantly harm the environment?

23 New York recycles and composts.
24 Why shouldn't this plan be guided by adaptive reuse?
25 Why call for so much waste, such gross waste? I've

1 tried to avoid using pejoratives in my testimony,
2 but this project is madness.

3 Please use your collective
4 intelligence, compassion and creativity to find much
5 better options to improving economic development in
6 a democratic way. Do not adopt this plan of
7 destruction, displacement and environmental
8 nightmare. Thank you.

9 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
10 your testimony. Our next speaker will be -- excuse
11 me -- Fern Luskin. Fern Luskin, you may unmute
12 yourself and let us know when you're ready to speak.

13 MS. LUSKIN: Forgot to unmute.

14 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. We can
15 hear you.

16 MS. LUSKIN: Yes, hi. Yes, I'm Fern
17 Luskin. I'm speaking as the co-chair of the Friends
18 of the Hopper Gibbons house underground railroad
19 site and from -- on behalf of myself and my
20 neighbors. Yes. As I do the necessary track work,
21 but my neighbors and I vociferously object to the
22 erection of the gargantuan towers and the
23 destruction of historic buildings, especially the
24 St. John The Baptist Church, one of the few 19th
25 century buildings in this area.

1 As I tell my students, these
2 modern glass and steel towers are bereft of the
3 ritually encrusted ornamentation characteristic of
4 19th and early century buildings, which are fast
5 disappearing. Replacing the church and the other
6 historic building scheduled to be demolished with
7 these towers will forever rob the City of this
8 architectural heritage, one of the things that made
9 it aesthetically great.

10 Let us instead demolish Madison
11 Square Garden, which has made Penn Station so
12 claustrophobic and squashed and resurrect McKim,
13 Mead and White's beautifully designed, spacious and
14 well-lit building for which detailed plans still
15 exist, perhaps accenting it with some modern
16 touches. The current Penn Station is a disgrace and
17 projects an unwelcoming message to visitors, such a
18 contrast to the grand light-infused terminals in
19 Washington, Boston and New York.

20 The Penn Station project plan will
21 almost completely obscure the profile of the Empire
22 State Building as viewed from 8th Avenue and 33rd
23 Street except for the needle, a view I regularly
24 witness tourists photographing. And one thing we
25 don't need is more congestion and traffic that this

1 project will surely generate.

2 To get the money to do the track
3 work, Penn Station project plan is a Faustian
4 Bargain with the developer and the City will forever
5 be stuck with this woe be gone outsized complex.
6 Please don't let it happen. Thank you very much.

7 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
8 your testimony. Our next speaker will be Michael
9 Bournas-Nay. Michael Bournas-Nay, please unmute
10 yourself and let us know. Oh, I can see you, but
11 just please unmute. Great.

12 MR. BOURNAS-NAY: Thank you. My
13 name is Michael Bournas-Nay and I'm a resident of
14 Chelsea. I must say I felt very hopeful when Kathy
15 Hochul became governor, but as a very concerned
16 resident of this neighborhood and as a registered
17 democrat, I just want to say that my vote in this
18 coming year's [Zoom inaudible] primary will be very
19 influenced by the position that Governor Hochul
20 takes on this frankly grotesque proposal and I
21 believe that other Democrats share this opinion.

22 It's a proposal that does not make
23 sense even prior to the pandemic when even then
24 there was already a glut of the commercial real
25 estate market. Moreover this proposal came into

1 being under the radar with most people in our
2 neighborhood not even being aware of it until very
3 recently. In this context, at least other public
4 hearings, some in-person, need to be held. Today's
5 hearing by itself is woefully inadequate for public
6 opinion to be truly heard.

7 This project represents the
8 State's complete user patient of local control by
9 means of circumventing ULURP. If approved, while
10 this project is being built, our neighborhood will
11 be subjected to enjoy approximately two decades of
12 construction with will result in noise and dust
13 pollution, which will be so extremely disruptive and
14 harmful.

15 Furthermore, if these towers do
16 come into being, extremely detrimental results will
17 flow from this boondoggle. These adverse effects
18 include the huge increase in population density, a
19 likely substantial negative impact on the City's
20 revenues, the destruction of star buildings, the
21 plunging of many streets into shadow and the
22 displacement of numerous individuals, families,
23 businesses and workers. This all to enrich a single
24 company, Vornado.

25 Notably I have not spoken to a

1 single person who has a positive feeling about the
2 Hudson Yards complex. How can we even consider
3 having still another Hudson Yards on steroids in our
4 immediate neighborhood? The revised GPP's 7 percent
5 reduction building plans is equivalent to a
6 100-story building nearly becoming a 93-floor
7 building. This tweaking is insufficient. It is
8 still not too late to take action now to stop what
9 clearly will be a colossal blunder.

10 I urge Governor Hochul, ESD and
11 the Penn Station area redevelopment project to hear
12 and heed the strong objections voiced by those who
13 will be directly affected by this project. Thank
14 you.

15 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
16 your testimony. We now have a new list of five
17 speakers and the five speakers who will come up next
18 will be;

19 Charles Weinstock;

20 Layla Law-Gisiko or Jisicko

21 (phonetic);

22 Robert Brenner;

23 Katherine O' Sullivan;

24 Thomas Rinaldi.

25 So the first speaker on that list

1 will be Charles Weinstock. Charles Weinstock,
2 please unmute yourself and let us know when you're
3 ready.

4 MR. WEINSTOCK: How's that?

5 THE HEARING OFFICER: We can hear
6 you.

7 MR. WEINSTOCK: Okay. Good. I
8 want to focus on one point in my written comments,
9 which I don't think anyone's touched on, ESD's
10 assumption that they're not required by law to
11 consider the financing of the new station. The
12 issue isn't whether it would be nice or helpful or
13 more logical if they did. The issue is whether they
14 have to.

15 In every SEQRA review, the first
16 question is what's the purpose in need? Well, the
17 purpose of this project is to raise money for
18 another project. That's the only reason it exists.
19 It's true typically financing isn't a secret topic,
20 but given the goal here it has to be. We need to
21 know how much the station is really going to cost
22 and how much this override is really going to help.

23 It's pretty obvious by the only
24 number we do have for the master plan is a single
25 loose all in-figure because nobody knows what the

1 station is going to look like. All we've seen are
2 a few renderings presented by a single agency
3 without a hint of support from its partners. As for
4 the expansion across the street, we don't even have
5 a rendering, urban planning on a cocktail napkin.

6 Nor do we know what we'll actual
7 get from the towers. Honestly it's kind of
8 remarkable that ESD still doesn't have a revenue
9 plan. All that their very cautious consultant,
10 Ernst and Young, can say is that there are five
11 revenue categories that could be used. In
12 December 2021 after six months of postponements, we
13 shouldn't be at good.

14 Even accepting their numbers and
15 their way too optimistic schedule, almost all the
16 money is going to come after the station's built.
17 Actually, it's going to come later than that since
18 there's no deadline for starting construction. It
19 could be decades.

20 The long and short of it is this
21 override doesn't stand a chance of bringing in
22 \$2 billion before 2030, so the agency should just
23 say it. Except for the 1.3 billion, New York's going
24 to be issuing bonds for it entire share of the
25 project costs, however high they turn out to be.

1 It should also say that down the
2 road, the revenue from the tower is highly unlikely
3 to repay the bonds. So what we're left with in the
4 end is a needlessly bountiful real estate giveaway
5 and it will fail to do the only thing that might
6 justify it. Thanks.

7 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
8 your testimony. Our next speaker will be Layla
9 Law-Gisiko or Jisiko (phonetic). You can unmute
10 yourself and let us know what you're ready.

11 MS. LAW-GISIKO: Thank you. Good
12 evening. My name is Layla Law-Gisiko. I am the
13 Chair of the Land Use, Housing and Zoning Committee
14 of Manhattan Community Board 5. I'm here today to
15 share Community Board 5's position on the General
16 Project Plan as it relates to funding and land use.
17 Community Board 5 appreciates that ESD has made
18 modifications to the original project.
19 Unfortunately, these modifications are too modest.

20 After careful review of materials
21 provided by Ernst and Young, a consultant to ESD as
22 well, as a developer we stake in the area, likely
23 Vornado, CB 5 finds that the funding and financing
24 schemes would be likely a liability and could end up
25 costing billions of dollars to taxpayers.

1 In order to provide funding to MTA
2 to reconstruct and expand Penn Station, ESD would
3 issue bonds promptly after the adoption of the GPP,
4 but revenue backing these bonds would only start to
5 trickle in in 2028 upon completion of the new
6 proposed building in the best case scenario. And it
7 could also never trickle in if Vornado chooses not
8 to develop the properties, a very likely eventuality
9 given that the very volatile nature of the
10 oversaturated New York City commercial, real estate
11 market.

12 The bonds, once issued, will be
13 guaranteed by the State, which will start to produce
14 interest to bond holders and the State or ESD would
15 likely have to repay the first cost before revenue
16 would even be generated. It would amount to putting
17 the Penn reconstruction and expansion on an already
18 maxed-out credit card with no hope of bringing
19 additional revenue. The debt service to ESD would
20 be very high. It would also prevent the City from
21 enabling their own value capture plan. The funding
22 scheme is similar to Hudson Yards, a development
23 that has cost already \$2.3 billion to taxpayers.

24 Additionally, according to Ernst &
25 Young, the bond rating would need to be enhanced as

1 -- on a stand-alone basis, the bonds would not be
2 investable. While credit enhancement is not rare,
3 it is costly and should be avoided when possible.

4 Finally, ESD stated in recent
5 documents that the PILOTs, payment in lieu of taxes,
6 would not deplete the City coverage, but we do not
7 know how much property owners would pay in excess of
8 the ad valorem taxes owed to the City. This is
9 excess and is likely to be modest. This revenue
10 will also be used to fund a public realm improvement
11 fund as well as a transportation monitoring plan, so
12 how much money will be left? We also know that MSG
13 has not been paying taxes since 1980s, so how much
14 lost revenue, again, are we encountering?

15 We have a once in a century
16 opportunity to fix Penn Station with the help of the
17 federal government infrastructure bill. New York,
18 the second wealthiest state in the country, should
19 not need to rely on such lame tactics to fund for
20 its landmarks projects, the reconstruction and
21 expansion of Penn Station. New York must put New
22 York's money where New York's mouth is without using
23 our blocks as an ATM. Thank you.

24 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
25 your testimony. Our next speaker -- excuse me. Our

1 next speaker will be Robert Brenner.

2 MR. BRENNER: Hi, it's getting
3 late, so I'm going to keep my remarks brief. I'm
4 calling in to vote against this current plan. I
5 happen to live and work in the neighborhood. I'm
6 very familiar with the area around Penn Station. It
7 has many unique small businesses. These are real
8 businesses with real employees and real customers.
9 They will not be easily replaced. They won't be
10 replaced at all.

11 What this plan proposes instead
12 are office glass towers. As we've seen during the
13 pandemic, these office glass towers are extremely
14 vulnerable to people switching over to remote
15 telework. They remain vulnerable. There was a glut
16 of office space in New York City before the pandemic
17 and continues during the pandemic and it will
18 continue after the pandemic. So no. I vote no on
19 this plan. Thank you very much.

20 THE HEARING OFFICER: Great. Thank
21 you for your testimony. At this time, we will --
22 excuse me just a moment. Our next speaker will be
23 Katherine O' Sullivan and -- yes, our next speaker
24 will be Katherine O' Sullivan. If you are -- you
25 can unmute yourself and let us know when you're

1 ready to begin. Do we have Katherine O' Sullivan in
2 the room?

3 (No response.)

4 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. At
5 this time, Katherine O' Sullivan if you are hearing
6 this and you decide you want to speak again later or
7 -- oh, excuse me. I'm sorry. The time to add your
8 name has passed at this point. We'll move onto the
9 next speaker, Thomas Rinaldi. Thomas Rinaldi, if
10 you would like to unmute yourself, let us know
11 you're ready to begin.

12 MR. RINALDI: I'm here. Can you
13 hear me?

14 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

15 MR. RINALDI: Okay. Let's go.
16 Good evening and thank you for the opportunity to
17 speak here tonight. My name is Tom Rinaldi. I live
18 and work a few blocks from Penn Station and I've
19 been a frequent user of Penn Station for nearly
20 25 years. I work as an architectural designer for a
21 firm that specializes in restorations here in new
22 York.

23 As a neighborhood and frequent
24 user of Penn Station, I welcome the long overdue
25 improvement to the facile and the neighborhood.

1 However, there are aspects of the
2 proposed project that are wholly unacceptable,
3 specifically with regard to the architectural
4 character of what is being destroyed and what is to
5 be built here.

6 When I began using Penn Station
7 regularly back in the '90s, the sense of loss for
8 the original station was still palpable. For years,
9 relics of the old building were rooted out and
10 derated in times when articles on dragnets in the
11 Meadowlands were surviving chunks of monumental
12 sculpture from the old building and on grass
13 handrails that somehow escaped removal during the
14 station's construction in the '60s.

15 Eventually we hoped there would be
16 some kind of an atonement for that monumental act of
17 vandalism that destroyed one of the city's proudest
18 show places. It never occurred to me that atonement
19 would come in the form of a doubling down on the
20 demolition of the original station, expanding it to
21 include the whole surrounding area. Even the
22 station's very name, we learned recently, is on the
23 chopping block.

24 If there's a hallowed ground for
25 historic preservation and architectural history

1 anywhere in the city, it is here and yet right
2 across the street, we are now about to see, not one,
3 but two McKim, Mead and White buildings built in
4 conjunction with the old station and completely
5 razed and replaced with vast squads of glass and
6 steel office towers and hardscaped public plazas
7 that appear to have come straight out of the same
8 1960s era playbook that took down the old Penn
9 Station.

10 The main point I'd like to make is
11 that we can have new development here without
12 destroying all of the existing historic fabric they
13 give us as part of midtown. Its unique sense of
14 place, in a word gotham, and then with a more
15 nuanced approach, we can have great new buildings
16 and great old buildings that compliment one another
17 and give us a project that is not only more
18 sustainable, but more engaging as well.

19 In conclusion, vast improvements
20 are obviously needed for Penn Station and the area
21 surrounding it. There is ample opportunity to
22 redevelopment much of this area without destroying
23 every last one of the historic resources identified
24 therein. I believe that new buildings should be
25 built between the historic buildings here in a way

1 that capitalizes on the essential sense of contrast
2 that gives this city its vitality and its identity
3 and that this will give us a finished project we can
4 be far happier with in the end.

5 I'd like to note that the
6 mitigation measures described in the DEIS do not
7 even begin to adequately address the losses involved
8 and, in fact, they appear to completely leave out
9 several sites of the area including the Hotel
10 Stewart and the Gimbel's Skybridge.

11 I believe that at a more micro
12 level, existing relics of the original Penn Station
13 should be restored and incorporated into the improve
14 station facility and that this too will yield a far
15 better result than one that essentially finishes the
16 job of ruining the old station.

17 And with a few seconds, I would
18 just like to add ULURP. This has to go through
19 ULURP. Are you crazy? It's billion of dollars.
20 Anyway, with that thank you very much and have a
21 good night.

22 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you
23 very much for for your testimony. At this time, our
24 next speaker is Justin Rodgers who I believe is
25 actually not -- he's not on the Zoom at this point

1 and we are experiencing a technical difficulty on
2 the back end so we're going to need to take a --
3 we're going to need to take a brief break, about
4 five minutes and I'll return at that time. So at
5 this point, yes, we're going to go on a brief break.

6 (Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

7 THE HEARING OFFICER: Hi, everyone.
8 I -- excuse me. Hi, everyone. My apologies. Hi,
9 everyone. My apologies. We are having some
10 technical difficulties at the moment. We do not
11 mean to interrupt. The hearing is still going to
12 continue, just waiting for one issue to be resolved
13 and we will -- we will restart testimony
14 momentarily.

15 (Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

16 THE HEARING OFFICER: Hello,
17 everyone and thank you so much for bearing with us.
18 Unfortunately, we have had a technical difficult --
19 technical issue where we do not have an ASL
20 interpreter for the balance of this evening.

21 However, we intend to continue
22 this hearing and want everyone to have the
23 opportunity to give their testimony as planned.

24 I've had conversations with Holly
25 Leicht and Marion Phillips and the rest of the

1 Empire State Development staff and we will continue
2 tonight's hearing from now and everyone who has
3 signed up to speak will have the opportunity to
4 speak this evening. In addition to that, we will
5 give a notice this week that there will be an
6 additional public hearing in January, which will
7 have ASL interpretation for the entirety of the
8 public hearing.

9 So thank you for -- again, thank
10 you so much for bearing with us. I'm going to ask
11 that another host please also -- hold on one second.
12 I'm going to also put that in the chat and then we
13 will resume with our next speaker. Bear with me
14 while I complete the written notice in the chat that
15 you'll see in just a moment.

16 Okay. Thank you. I'd like to
17 direct your attention to the chat, which just states
18 what I had just said. So thank you very much again
19 for your patience. We will now continue with the
20 next five speakers on our list. The first of whom
21 is:

22 Justin Rodgers;

23 And then Alexandros Washburn;

24 And then Tokumbo Shobowale;

25 And then Felicia Park-Rogers;

1 Followed by Jordan Auslander.

2 So Justin Rodgers, you may unmute
3 yourself and provide your testimony at this time.

4 (No response.)

5 THE HEARING OFFICER: Sorry. I
6 believe that Justin Rodgers is not with us. I'll
7 give one more call to Justin Rodgers.

8 (No response.)

9 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. We'll
10 move to the next speaker, Alexandros Washburn.
11 Alexandros Washburn, if you would like to unmute
12 yourself and let us know when you're ready to speak.

13 MR. WASHBURN: Good evening. Thank
14 you.

15 THE HEARING OFFICER: And you can
16 begin.

17 MR. WASHBURN: Thank you. Thank
18 you for the opportunity to comment on the ESD
19 General Project Plan for Penn Station. My name is
20 Alexandros Washburn and I'm the Director of the
21 Grand Penn Community Alliance, a group which shares
22 the same objective: The transformation of Penn
23 Station and its neighborhood into a world class
24 destination.

25 I started my career working for

1 Senator Moynihan and I'm the guy he sent to New York
2 to build the Farley project that now bears his
3 name. Later, I was the Chief Urban Designer at the
4 New York City Department of City Planning.

5 We all agree that the demolition
6 of the late, great classical Penn Station was one of
7 the biggest land use mistakes we've ever made as a
8 city, But I'd like to point out that we didn't
9 demolish Penn Station so much as decapitate it. The
10 guts of the original station are still there in the
11 basement and that's what we call Penn Station
12 today. The final design of a new Penn Station will
13 go through many stages. It need not be exactly like
14 the original, though the proportions and the
15 grandeur would certainly feel current today.

16 It would be wrong to keep that
17 station in the basement. Let's follow the
18 foundations that are still there and rebuild it back
19 up into the light and make up for our mistakes of
20 the past.

21 Let's applaud Governor Hochul for
22 recognizing the need for public space around the
23 train station. Public investment in public spaces
24 not only raises our spirits and improves our lives,
25 it's also good business. The development perimeter

1 should be further back. This will allow more public
2 space, more light to the station, and more
3 development around a larger perimeter. This is a
4 win-win-win.

5 I'm a Knicks fan, but I have to
6 admit Madison Square Garden could be better. It's
7 the most famous arena in America, yes, but it's also
8 the oldest arena in the NBA. It is as old as I am.
9 For my kids, I want the best arena. Let's face it,
10 MSG is limited by being on top of Penn Station, and
11 Penn Station is limited by being under MSG.

12 Can't we find a way to make both
13 better? We want and deserve the best train station
14 in the world and the best arena in the world.
15 Compromise should not be a cop out. We've been told
16 by government "Do you want Penn Station right or do
17 you want Penn Station right now?" That's a false
18 choice. We can get it right and we can get it right
19 now. Thank you.

20 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
21 your testimony. Our next speaker will be Tokumbo
22 Shobowale. If you'd like to unmute yourself, let us
23 know when you're ready to begin.

24 MR. SHOBOWALE: Good evening. My
25 name is Tokumbo Shobowale. I'm a board member of

1 the Regional Plan Association. For the past six
2 months, I have also served as a member of the
3 Community Advisory Working Group evidently known as
4 the CAC WG along with many other Patch New Yorkers
5 and colleagues.

6 The proposed project is first and
7 foremost a benefit to the entire City and to the
8 entire region. It is in this content we must
9 evaluate it in terms of how well it will function
10 and the impact it will be. Accordingly, I'm here
11 tonight to express strong support to Governor
12 Hochul's vision to bring Penn Station into the 21st
13 century. This is a once in a generational
14 opportunity to create a resilient, vibrant gateway
15 to the heart of New York City for hundreds and
16 thousands New Yorkers, commuters and tourists.

17 For too long, Penn station and the
18 larger Penn district have not lived up to the
19 potential of the City and for the region. The
20 revised project proposal offers a clear solution to
21 an infrastructure gap that has had negative impacts
22 on our work force and our economy for decades. This
23 station will transform the Penn district into a
24 modern, efficient hub for New Yorkers across every
25 borough and beyond.

1 The creation of eight acres of new
2 public space, including a large public plaza,
3 reduces car dependency and creating more vibrant
4 places and increase our carbon footprint for the
5 future. While our city economic has grown in the
6 last 50 years, capacity at Penn Station has not
7 expanded at the means of tripling demand.

8 Pedestrians are crammed into
9 crowded claustrophobic and cave-like corridors
10 creating unsafe and uncomfortable conditions that
11 discourage citizens and commuters from moving freely
12 into our region. The new Penn Station plan will
13 create bright, indoor and outdoor space that make
14 navigation more intuitive and more than double
15 passenger circulation space. New Yorkers and
16 visitors should feel safe and comfortable while
17 entering and leaving the city.

18 For the past few months, the
19 project team has already made substantive
20 significant change to plan responding to objections
21 and concerns being vouchered or worked through. I
22 thank the team for this engagement in response.
23 Although the plan is still imperfect, we simply
24 cannot allow the perfect to be any of the good.

25 Over decades there is plans for a

1 new station that have died on the vine when windows
2 of opportunity have closed. We cannot lose this
3 historic potential benefit to the City and region.
4 We must not be timid and take half measures.

5 Much of the benefit comes from our
6 ability in this case to plan comprehensively, not
7 just for one improvement we're building but for an
8 entire complex including expanded platform capacity,
9 streetscapes and public realm that are integrally
10 tied to the function of the transit hub.

11 Given this, it's critical for
12 management structure going forward From not only
13 leadership from the City of New York or the City of
14 Planning, Department of Transportation, but also
15 from New Jersey Transit. Governor Hochul's plan for
16 Penn Station is a visionary transformation of New
17 York's gateway vision. Penn Station needs to be
18 brought in the 21st century and we cannot miss this
19 opportunity.

20 Let's do everything we can to
21 support this investment to New York City, the
22 region's future while we still have a opportunity of
23 substantial federal support. I'm proud to speak on
24 behalf of the Regional Plan Association, my hundreds
25 of community colleagues, my young children and many

1 fellow New Yorkers in sponge support. Thank you.

2 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
3 your testimony. Our next speaker will be Felicia
4 Park-Rogers. Felicia Park-Rogers, you may unmute
5 yourself and begin.

6 MS. PARK-ROGERS: Hi. Good
7 evening. My name is Felicia Park-Rogers, no
8 relationship to the earlier Rodgers who didn't show
9 up. I'm a Director of regional infrastructure
10 project for Tri-State Transportation Campaign, which
11 is a regional transit and transportation policy and
12 advocacy organization.

13 The GPP and DEIS point us in the
14 direction of reimagining the streetscape and
15 attracting with integrating transit solutions in and
16 around Penn station. We appreciate the work and
17 effort of ESD to make revisions to the scoping
18 documents.

19 However, much work is still
20 required to create a thoughtful and carefully
21 constructed vision of how the below ground and
22 aboveground pieces of this puzzle fit together.

23 Doing this right would improve
24 safety, reliability and ease of use of transit, is
25 crucial to success to the redevelopment of the area.

1 Given the complexity of the project and the various
2 stakeholders involved, including the MTA, New Jersey
3 Transit and Amtrak, we believe there should be one
4 overriding organizing authority similar to the
5 Gateway Development Corporation to create one
6 comprehensive plan for both transit and public realm
7 improvements.

8 Today we have new leadership at
9 the state level and beginning January 1st, we will
10 have new leadership at the city level as well. The
11 City's leadership has been noticeably absent from
12 this process. For the State to redevelop the heart
13 of our city without more city input is a mistake we
14 have an opportunity to fix in the coming months.

15 Furthermore, we urge ESDC and the
16 Governor to work in close collaboration with
17 Mayor-Elect Adams to bring MSG to the table. MSG
18 receives huge benefits due to their location and
19 proximity to regional transit. They pay no taxes.
20 They must sit at the table and participate in the
21 process of improving Penn Station and the
22 surrounding streetscapes. It is not possible to
23 fundamentally improve this area without MSG's
24 participation.

25 I have additional comments, but I

1 will save them and submit them in writing. Thank
2 you this evening for your time and consideration.

3 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
4 your testimony. Our next speaker will be Jordan
5 Auslander. Jordan Auslander, please unmute yourself
6 and you can begin your testimony.

7 MR. AUSLANDER: Okay. Am I
8 unmuted? I'm unmuted.

9 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

10 MR. AUSLANDER: Madison Square
11 Garden doesn't pay any taxes? Why are Knicks
12 tickets so expensive? Okay. So I'm Jordan
13 Auslander, a former DCP transportation planner and
14 Chelsea resident, so I'm usually pretty yimby about
15 transportation projects. All right.

16 So we were eloquently warned about
17 the perils of begetting history 16 years before the
18 landmarking law. In the 1830s, an aqueduct system
19 was initiated with a capacity to serve a city of
20 millions when New York was less than 300,000. Today
21 myopia rains. Witness at two-track Second Avenue
22 Subway to 125th Street, not the Bronx, Cuomo's
23 Tappan Zee without provisions for mass transit. Few
24 were thinking beyond what ribbons can be cut, you
25 know, during their term in office.

1 So as the original Penn Station is
2 being demolished, a third tube for the Queens
3 Midtown Tunnel was proposed, but that would only
4 determine which side of the river the bottle neck
5 was. Unless they use Robert Moses midtown
6 expressway, which would have demolished, you know,
7 midtown in order to save it, sort of that Vietnam
8 era mentality. But the plan was killed and the City
9 lived.

10 So studies in the 1980s estimated
11 that the Long Island Railroad's east side access
12 plan would reduce vehicular traffic through the
13 Queens Midtown Tunnel by 40 percent and this is
14 while the 63rd Street tunnel tubes languished. An
15 interim east side access could have realized decades
16 ago at a fraction of the cost by adding platforms to
17 the Long Island Railroad tubes on -- like around
18 Lexington Avenue.

19 The capacity issue remains. The
20 Penn Station complex asked for unfunded billions to
21 acquire and demolish properties when an operational
22 decision could effectively mitigate them. And that
23 is the through running, the fraction of a cost. I
24 mean, treat Penn Station as not two terminals, but
25 with an expanded platform access -- the Long Island

1 Railroad has the west side yard, Amtrak has
2 Sunnyside. You can even run the Bergen Light Rail
3 through one of the Lincoln tunnel tubes during off
4 peak while we're waiting for the gateway tunnel.

5 But this is a jurisdictional
6 problem, which is perhaps not insurmountable, but
7 this is not really about transit. Like West Way,
8 it's about developing real estate. Asking rents show
9 that this area is still desirable. Closing streets
10 does not create new public space and ripping the
11 guts out of a city for 33 FAR buildings is the
12 Vietnam approach. Singapore obliterated its history
13 and became something else. This is not why people
14 visit, move to and stay in New York.

15 The plea for the original Penn
16 Station still applies. Polish, don't demolish it.
17 It is not only greener to rehabilitate an existing
18 structure, but it also creates jobs. Perhaps not
19 what politicians and Vornado and the team have in
20 mind, but it's best for the City, its visitors and
21 the future and if you want to see the City as a
22 developer, the WTC.

23 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
24 your testimony. We now have a new list of five
25 speakers. The next five speakers will include:

1 William Otterson;
2 Anita DeMatteo;
3 Eugene Sinigalliano, whom I
4 believe already spoke;

5 Mirna Rodriguez;
6 And Ann McDermott.

7 That's the next group of speakers.
8 So the next speaker will be William Otterson.
9 William Otterson, you may unmute yourself and let us
10 know when you're ready to begin.

11 MR. OTTERSON: Yes, I'm a resident
12 of the block, which is to be demolished. I think
13 it's [REDACTED]. I'm a senior citizen. I've lived here
14 for over 44 years in my rent-stabilized apartment
15 that I'm able to afford thanks to SCRIE.

16 If my fear of the plan to demolish
17 my block is approved, I will quickly be evicted and
18 out on the street without a place to live because of
19 the unforgiving federal imminent domain laws. I
20 will no longer be able to continue filming the many
21 activities around New York including the ballet
22 project at Lincoln Center for the George Bellingham
23 Foundation and I'll have to leave New York for an
24 affordable place to live.

25 Additionally, I don't know why all

1 of these people that are for through-running trains
2 and building new Penn Station aboveground haven't
3 contacted President Biden. And here's something I
4 wrote to him yesterday:

5 "It's time for you to put your
6 name on the real solution to what is needed at Penn
7 Station, Gerald (sic). Through-running trains along
8 with a new magnificent aboveground Pennsylvania
9 station, bold moves that will alleviate the rail
10 transit bottlenecks we now have and will make your
11 name synonymous with the future of rail. They call
12 you Amtrak Joe. It's time to live up to that name
13 again.

14 You're a real fan, a railroad man.
15 Be our champion and create a regional railroad
16 network of through-running trains with that
17 magnificent new aboveground Pennsylvania station as
18 its currently an achievement. No longer just a
19 regional terminal where trains dead end and return
20 to their origins, but a real full-time railroad
21 station as its central hub that can and will lead to
22 the rebirth of rail in the northeast.

23 Hmm, what should we call it? We
24 know your name is already on the Wilmington Delaware
25 Amtrak Station. Yes, the Joseph R. Biden Jr.

1 Railroad Station. How about President Biden
2 station?" Thank you.

3 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
4 your testimony. Our next speaker will be Anita
5 DeMatteo. Anita DeMatteo, if you would like to
6 unmute yourself, you may begin when you're ready,
7 Anita DeMatteo, if you are with us please unmute
8 yourself and let us know if you'd still like to
9 speak.

10 (No response.)

11 THE HEARING OFFICER: No? Okay.
12 The next speaker listed is Eugene Sinigalliano who
13 was able to speak early in the hearing.

14 So we'll move next to Mirna
15 Rodriguez. Mirna Rodriguez, please unmute yourself
16 and let us know when you're ready to speak.

17 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Hi. Can you hear
18 me?

19 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

20 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Okay. I'm a tenant
21 of [REDACTED] and I've been here for
22 40 years. I raised my daughters here. I nurtured
23 my mom here until she died. I do not want to leave
24 my place. I want to live here. I do not want to be
25 displaced.

1 I see and I hear very thorough
2 plans about what's going to happen with this plan
3 for Penn Station and I do agree it needs to be
4 renovated, but I don't think we need to displace
5 anyone. I think they should have a thorough plan, a
6 written plan as to what's going to happen to the
7 people that will be displaced. I mean, they have a
8 thorough plan about everything else, but I don't see
9 anything.

10 I feel like I'm in limbo and just
11 to think about the, you know, we do have protection
12 as far as the rent-stabilized law and there's
13 nothing written that we will be secure with that
14 permanently.

15 And also what's happening right
16 now, I hear the noise. I see all the debris in the
17 air. Imagine with all the demolition that's going
18 to take place what that's going to do with my
19 environment. Right now I have to keep all my
20 windows closed. I don't know how to cover my air
21 conditioner from outside, but I know that debris is
22 coming in.

23 I'm very concerned and I would
24 really appreciate it if they would reconsider this
25 plan to not only benefit Penn Station, which I agree

1 needs to be renovated, but to also help and not
2 displace anyone because of it. Thank you so much.

3 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you
4 very much for your testimony. Our next speaker will
5 be Ann McDermott. Ann McDermott--

6 MS. MC DERMOTT: That's me. I'm
7 here.

8 THE HEARING OFFICER: Great. You
9 can start when you're ready.

10 MS. MC DERMOTT: Great. My name is
11 Ann McDermott. I'm a lifelong New Yorker. My father
12 is born and raised on the west side of Manhattan.
13 When I was a little girl, he walked me through Penn
14 Station and he said to me, "you know, I used to sell
15 newspapers here when I was a kid" and I was like
16 "where? Where would a kid sell newspapers in this
17 hellhole?" And then it wasn't until I was older and
18 I saw the pictures of the actual Penn Station that I
19 said, "oh, that was where my father sold
20 newspapers."

21 So now I had worked most of my
22 career in a building somewhere around there. I've
23 worked at 2 Penn. I've worked at 1 Penn. I worked
24 on 31st Street. I worked at 1250 Broadway. I know
25 that the neighborhood really, really, really, well.

1 And last night we had a vigil for the Gimbel's
2 Skybridge, which is about to be demolished.

3 And this plan is criminal. That's
4 the only word I can use to describe what's going to
5 happen to my neighbors and my friends who live on
6 30th Street and on Eighth Avenue and the beautiful
7 buildings.

8 Not to mention that it's going to
9 destroy the view of the Empire State Building and
10 the Empire State Building is the number one tourist
11 asset for New York City from a skyline vantage
12 point. I know because I'm a licensed New York City
13 tour guide and everybody always asks about the
14 Empire State Building and visiting it.

15 So I just want to say that this is
16 a theft of public assets. You're going to be
17 evicting hundred of taxpayers from their homes, some
18 of whom own their homes and some of whom are
19 renters. It's going to be a destruction of historic
20 community places like St. Johns Church, which is
21 magnificent, small businesses -- I mean, I'm sort of
22 repeating what everybody else here has said, but I
23 just want to register and say that this is an
24 outrage.

25 And I also want to hold the press

1 to account because they are not telling the real
2 story about what's really going on here. And people
3 on this thing are talking about, oh, we're going to
4 rebuild and we're going to do a walk way between
5 34th street, you know, from the Herald Square
6 Station. There already is a walkway at Herald
7 Square Station. It's been there for, I don't know,
8 50, 60 years.

9 When they built the independent
10 Subway, they connected it to the IoT on 7th Avenue,
11 but it was closed in the 70 -- in the '80 or '90s
12 because of the homeless situation, which is pretty
13 horrible in that neighborhood. It's nothing --
14 they're doing nothing to help it. So this is all for
15 the ego of Steve Roth and Vornado shareholders and
16 we, the people, are going to stand up.

17 And I just want to say this is a
18 hearing. It's supposed to be a hearing where people
19 hear what we're saying and there's two people from
20 ESD in the list who are here.

21 Where's Governor Hochul? Where's
22 Brad Hoylman? Where's the people who are supposed
23 to be representing us and supporting us and hearing
24 what the actual public has to say because as I see
25 what's going on in this hearing, 95 percent of the

1 people are against this plan. Thank you.

2 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
3 your testimony. We'll now share a list of our next
4 five speakers. The next five speakers will include:

5 Vishaan Chakrabarti;

6 Dave Achelis or Akelis (phonetic);

7 Jonathan Baron;

8 Michael Benabib;

9 Lisa Mackie.

10 That's the list of next five
11 speakers. So the next speaker will be Vishaan
12 Chakrabarti. Vishaan Chakrabarti, you may unmute
13 yourself and begin when you're ready. Okay. Do we
14 have Vishaan Chakrabarti on the hearing at this
15 time?

16 (No response.)

17 THE HEARING OFFICER: Nope, then
18 we'll move onto Dave Achelis or Akelis. My
19 apologies for --

20 MR. ACHELIS: It's fine. Hi. Can
21 you hear me?

22 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you.
23 Yes.

24 MR. ACHELIS: Good evening and
25 thank you for the opportunity to testify in this

1 important project. My name ma Dave Achelis and I'm
2 a member of Community Board 5 and a resident of the
3 district. I am here today to share Community Board
4 5's position on the central project plan as it
5 relates to open space and public realm.

6 CB 5 appreciates that ESD has made
7 modifications to the original project.

8 Unfortunately, the proposed modifications are too
9 modest. CB 5 continues to strongly object to the
10 proposal based on those grounds. First, public
11 realm and open space would be overwhelmed by the
12 projected 10 supertall towers.

13 When the Governor announced on
14 November 3rd that she would create eight acres of
15 open space as part of this GPP, it received praise.
16 This number repeated oddly and I'm noticing the
17 media is very misleading. Eight acres conjures up
18 blocks of Madison Square park, lawns and trees,
19 benches and a playground, but unfortunately the
20 eight acres of open space in this GPP are made up of
21 sidewalks, subway entrances as well as shared
22 streets, areas that are bare necessities to allow
23 pedestrian traffic and do not provide the
24 desperately needed passive use of open space this
25 area needs.

1 Even as we had been told
2 additional open space is to be created between sites
3 7 and 8, it would still be inadequate. The
4 proposed GPP will create extreme density and we'll
5 see a drastic reduction of open space per user.
6 Overall the sidewalk enlargement scheme is not
7 sufficient to accommodate the projected foot
8 traffic. The EIS predicts a tenfold increase in
9 pedestrian traffic in an area already drastically
10 congested.

11 The open space has been compared
12 to Rockefeller Center, once again a woefully and
13 inadequate misleading comparison. Rockefeller
14 Center has a blended density of 11.9 FAR, while this
15 GPP has a blended dense of 21 FAR, almost double
16 that of Rock Center. Also, Rockefeller open space
17 and circulation are way more generous than this
18 clustered plan.

19 Second, the shared streets through
20 running will be intended to be very difficult to
21 implement. 31st and 33rd Street, the two streets
22 slated to become shared streets, will have
23 pedestrians mingling with tractor trailers loading
24 and unloading equipment from MSG. These competing
25 uses would be very dangerous.

1 Third, the street based designed
2 guidelines give lobby frontage the central role.
3 While lobby width is reduced from the original
4 proposal, it is still too wide. And it is to the
5 detriment of traffic transit egress, this plan
6 pitifully fails to create an above grade train rail
7 with dignified entrances. Penn Station will remain
8 in the basement of what is known by some as the
9 Vornado complex.

10 Finally, while CB 5 welcomes the
11 opportunity to serve on the public realm task force,
12 the group will only be in the work around a very
13 challenging public realm framework.

14 We urge this plan to be retired
15 and we urge the city to regain the exercise of their
16 zoning power, a power that shouldn't be aggregated.
17 Thank you.

18 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
19 your testimony. Our next speaker will be Johnson
20 barren. Jonathan Baron, you may unmute yourself and
21 speak when you're ready. Do we have Jonathan Baron
22 on the hearing still?

23 (No response.)

24 THE HEARING OFFICER: So we'll move
25 onto the next speaker, Michael Benabib. Michael

1 Benabib is our next speaker, but I'm not sure he's
2 here, so we'll move onto Lisa Mackie. Lisa Mackie,
3 if you'd like to unmute yourself and speak.

4 MS. MACKIE: Hello? Can you hear
5 me.

6 THE HEARING OFFICER: Hi. Yes, we
7 can.

8 MS. MACKIE: Good. Do you see me,
9 also? I'm not sure how to start my video. Okay.

10 THE HEARING OFFICER: Oh, yeah.
11 There it is. We can see you and hear you.

12 MS. MACKIE: Okay. My name is
13 Lisa Mackie. I have worked and lived at [REDACTED]
14 [REDACTED], New York City since 1980. I am an
15 active artist and professor and I plan to continue
16 to work and live in my residence for my entire life.

17 It has been stated by experts on
18 the through-running train plan at Penn station that
19 there is no need to enact eminent domain to tear
20 down any buildings Around Penn Station. Therefore,
21 the north side of the block, West 30th Street
22 between 7th and 8th should remain standing and we
23 should be able to remain in our lifelong
24 rent-stabilized homes.

25 All of New York City forms a woven

1 fabric. This fabric is woven with the threads of
2 culture, business, technology, beauty, humanity,
3 sensitivity and surprise. We are constantly weaving
4 New York City, finding new treads, mending the holes
5 and seeking new materials to enliven this cloth.
6 Here money is no object. There is nothing that we
7 can not buy because money creates New York City.
8 People come to see it, be in it, hear about it and
9 talk about it.

10 The Moynihan in Penn Station is an
11 excellent example of how to integrate transportation
12 and maintain an ambiance of Chelsea. 30th Street
13 between 7th and 8th are made up of a vintage church
14 and a pattern of high and low buildings for the
15 purpose of maintaining appropriate light. The
16 16 story tiered wedding cake building areas mirrored
17 by similar buildings on the other side of the block.
18 These elegant structures are of note because they
19 were all built around the same time As the Post
20 Office, the original, now demolished, Penn Station
21 and the still existing Penn Station electric plant,
22 which, of course, should be preserved.

23 If 50-story buildings are built on
24 the north side of the street, this historic
25 phenomena would not exist. The south side of 30th

1 Street would be dark and overshadowed. The high/low
2 configuration creates a unique atmosphere on this
3 scenic, familiar and comfortable street. The blocks
4 surrounding Penn Station are part of New York City's
5 fabric. Keep the concept of walking on the earth
6 with space and sunlight.

7 THE HEARING OFFICER: Excuse me.
8 I'm sorry. I was muted. Thank you for your
9 testimony. We have our next five speakers on the
10 screen now. Our next five speakers will include:

11 Barbara Blair;

12 Ruben Colon;

13 James Makin or Maykin;

14 Christopher Ulrich;

15 And Renee Kinsella.

16 The first speaker on this list
17 will be Barbara Blair. Barbara Blair, if you're
18 present, please unmute yourself.

19 (No response.)

20 THE HEARING OFFICER: I believe
21 that Barbara is not present, so we will move on to
22 Ruben Colon. Ruben Colon, if you -- I think we have
23 several speakers, registered speakers, who are no
24 longer with us. If we have Ruben Colon, James Makin
25 or Christopher Ulrich present in the hearing, please

1 raise your hand or chat at this time.

2 (No response.)

3 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. Then
4 at this time, we'll move onto Renee Kinsella. Renee
5 Kinsella, if you'd like to unmute yourself and let
6 us know when you're ready to begin.

7 MS. KINSELLA: I'm ready. Can you
8 hear me?

9 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes, we can.

10 MS. KINSELLA: Thank you. Hi. Good
11 evening and thanks for the opportunity to testify on
12 this important project. My name is Renee Kinsella.
13 I'm a member of Community Board 5 and a resident of
14 the district. I'm here today to share Community
15 Board 5's position on the General Project Plan as it
16 relates to urban design and historic sources.

17 Community Board 5 really
18 appreciates that ESD has made modifications to the
19 original project, but unfortunately the proposed
20 modifications are too modest. Community Board 5
21 continues to strongly object the proposal based on
22 those grounds.

23 The extreme density of proposed
24 building will cause a myriad of negative impacts.
25 The clustering of supertall towers in such a small

1 perimeter would render our streets very dark and
2 inhospitable. The buildings would cause long and
3 deep shadows that would affect numerous residential
4 developments including Penn South and other
5 sun-sensitive resources.

6 Second, the new design guidelines
7 would eliminate daylight evaluation metrics. It
8 would allow buildings to create an impressive canyon
9 similar to what we see in downtown Manhattan. This
10 canyon effect would reduce the usability of the
11 shared streets that would be dark and cold
12 especially in the winter months. First, the new
13 buildings would obstruct use into the Empire State
14 Building, our most significant historic recourse.

15 In the revised proposal, few
16 corridors along 33rd Street are slightly more
17 protected. It's a step in the right direction, but
18 it's not sufficient. All of the view corridors onto
19 Empire State Building must be protected. The use
20 into the Empire State Building should not be
21 profitized for the sole enjoyment of the tenants of
22 the Vornado towers.

23 Fourth, this real estate plan
24 would cause the demolition of numerous historic
25 resources, including the historic McKim, Mead and

1 White Pennsylvania hotel, which was built in 1919
2 and the copper clan, three stories high Gimbel's
3 Bridge. Built in 1925, the skybridge was designed
4 by architecture firm, Shreve and Lamb, who'd go on
5 to develop the Empire State Building.

6 We cannot let the mistakes of the
7 past repeat themselves. The area still bears the
8 scars of the 1960 horrendous urban design policies.
9 Further demolition of the area is a violent act of
10 urban planning that would erode even more of our
11 neighborhood.

12 Finally, the cruel irony is not
13 lost on us that in April of 2021, the SHPO decided
14 to very quietly put the superblock of MSG and 2 Penn
15 on the list of eligible sites to the national
16 register. The reason and vote? It's the birthplace
17 of the historic preservation of it in New York City,
18 a cruel irony indeed as the two buildings have been
19 called the worst buildings in the City by many
20 critics and are harshly described by ESD's own
21 neighborhood condition study. It's like celebrating
22 the murder for the very murder they committed.

23 To summarize, ESD [Zoom inaudible]
24 a cruel loss of precious historic [Zoom inaudible]
25 will allow a new built environment that will be

1 hostile to pedestrians. We urge you to retire this
2 plan and let the City keep control of their moving
3 process. Thank you.

4 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
5 your testimony. At this time, we have a new list of
6 speakers. The next five speakers will be:

7 Mario G. Messina;

8 James Von Klemperer;

9 Max Wycisk;

10 Francois Roux;

11 And Mary Brosnahan.

12 If Mario G, Messina is present,
13 please unmute yourself.

14 (No response.)

15 THE HEARING OFFICER: I believe
16 that Mario G. Messina is not present, so we'll move
17 on to James Von Klemperer.

18 MR. VON KLEMPERER: Yes. Thank
19 you very much. So I'm James Von Klemperer. I'm an
20 architect, President of Kohn Pedersen Fox Architects
21 for New York. Also, chair of the Urban Design Forum
22 that's studying this area and a resident of CB 5.

23 So as an architect, to think about
24 this problem -- we are architect of neighborhoods,
25 such as residential areas, Bed Stuy, of Hunts

1 Points, of Red Hook, so -- also Greenwich Village,
2 but we are residents of high rises, which is of
3 course what I want to talk about today. So -- and
4 about the GPP.

5 So the project's a great urban
6 density of tracks and -- in transit areas are great,
7 great importance to the cities in which we work,
8 London, New York, Shanghai, Hong Kong, for example.
9 In particular we had designed one Vanderbilt tower,
10 which I'd like to think about that trade off between
11 public and private that's so much at work from that
12 project and in a way applicable to the GPP.

13 So I want to speak in support of
14 this series of measures. Mainly because of -- I
15 believe what's so important about achieving a great
16 density of this area, density that will help to pay
17 for the great investment that needs to go into
18 infrastructure, the improvement to the station that
19 we've all been waiting for. Not just the station
20 itself, but to the district for decades really.

21 There are great advantages I
22 believe that could come with this new build that has
23 to do with sustainability. The electrifying of
24 buildings was mentioned. The importance of making
25 great public space. I think that the

1 pedestrianization of 33rd and 31st Street is
2 possible, is feasible. It could yield a good urban
3 open space and public realm results.

4 We have good examples. The
5 closing of Vanderbilt Avenue at that point, next to
6 Grand Central is a very good example. I think these
7 buildings as they're projected could accommodate a
8 certain amount of urban in green, get to higher
9 levels. As was mentioned, the regulation or the
10 monetary process of the design could afford a series
11 of skillfully designed buildings with a kind of
12 urban passage -- a permeability at the base and it
13 gives a sense of delight.

14 So I think on the whole in this
15 situation, the best can be the enemy of the good.
16 This is a chance for us to do something for New York
17 that hasn't been achieved in generations and if we
18 don't do it in the current cycle of economic and
19 political circumstances, we may miss out for our
20 generation and it is so, so important that we make
21 one of the great transit centers of the world out of
22 what is in input of New York meant to be, but today
23 a sorry disappointment for so many New Yorkers.
24 This is a project for all of New York. Thank you.

25 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for

1 your testimony. Our next speaker will be Max
2 Wycisk. Apologies for the pronunciation. Max
3 Wycisk, you may unmute and begin when you're ready.

4 MR. WYCISK: Thank you. Good
5 evening. I'm giving this testimony on behalf of Dan
6 Biederman, the President of the 34th Street
7 Partnership. Part of our mission is to steward and
8 strengthen this part of midtown, helping it reach
9 its fullest economic and cultural potential.

10 Over the years, one of our biggest
11 road blocks has been Penn Station, but thanks to
12 Governor Hochul, we have a rare once-in a lifetime
13 opportunity to improve both the district and station
14 by transforming both into the vital modern
15 transportation hubs we need them to be.

16 The revised GPP prioritizes
17 substantial improvements to the public realm and its
18 infrastructure from widened and heightened corridors
19 to better wayfinding and increased accessible.
20 We'll see wider sidewalks and new retail that will
21 activate our streetscapes in an all around improved
22 commuting experience that will see commuters spend
23 more of their time and dollars here.

24 Repairing this transportation hub
25 will mean workers and visitors can more safely and

1 easily navigate the current maze of tunnels and
2 corridors to frequent the thousands of businesses
3 throughout the district without the thought of
4 having to use this antiquated complex looming over
5 their head. The pandemic has dealt a hard blow to
6 midtown, causing many of our small businesses to go
7 bankrupt or close altogether.

8 A bold investment in our
9 infrastructure at this level is exactly what we need
10 to move forward and rebuild. To us, this is a
11 no-brainer and there is no time to waste. We can't
12 afford any more delays and we commend Governor
13 Hochul for fast tracking the construction and
14 development process to deliver improvements to New
15 Yorkers sooner rather than later. It is time that
16 our city has a modern transportation center made for
17 the future.

18 This is a symbol of our recovery
19 and declaration that New York is back for good. We
20 proudly support this project and midtown's best days
21 ahead of it and Governor Hochul's plan is a part of
22 that vision. Thank you.

23 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
24 your testimony. Our next speaker will be Francois
25 Roux. You may unmute and begin when you're ready.

1 MR. ROUX: Can you hear me?

2 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

3 MR. ROUX: Okay. Great. Thank you
4 very much for the hearing tonight. I wanted to talk
5 because I am an owner of an apartment located on [REDACTED]
6 [REDACTED] and I wanted to talk a little bit
7 about something that we don't hear often in these
8 hearings. It's how we feel as an owner or someone
9 renting an apartment in this block that is going to
10 be destroyed potentially. It's part of the site,
11 too.

12 We have a lack of information
13 about how the process is going to take place. We
14 don't know what's going to happen to us. We have no
15 timeline, real timeline. We don't know if we're
16 going to be evicted or condemnation or imminent to
17 it. We cannot plan anything in the future, you
18 know, we cannot sell the apartment. We cannot make
19 prediction. For some people, but our renters, they
20 don't know what's going to happen to them and even
21 worse for the people that are rent-stabilized, the
22 future is even more difficult.

23 I think that we all agree that
24 Penn Station should be enhanced. That's not a
25 question at all. It's just there are so much other

1 options that could be available and probably not
2 explored the right way, but it's a little bit
3 difficult for me to accept this major plan without
4 first being more informed or protected by the State
5 or by the City or having a sense of being part of a
6 project.

7 And I think I wanted to talk more
8 about, you know, the voice of the people that are
9 living on the block and I think that we all love our
10 blocks and Anita, Eugene and so many other people
11 are trying to convince the people that we are here.
12 We are the living people inside and I think we don't
13 want to be forgotten.

14 And I'm sorry because I really
15 wanted to express myself better, but when I hear all
16 these people with wonderful ideas, with knowledge,
17 it's absolutely unbelievable. I just came to talk
18 about myself and who I am. Thank you very much for
19 this hearing. Thank you again.

20 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
21 your testimony. Our next speaker will be Mary
22 Brosnahan. Mary Brosnahan, you may unmute yourself
23 and begin when you're ready.

24 MS. BROSNAHAN: Okay. Can you
25 hear me?

1 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

2 MS. BROSNAHAN: Okay. Hi,
3 everyone. Thank you Francois for your comments.
4 Very inspirational, very humbling to hear from the
5 actual residents who will be removed from their
6 homes if this goes through. My name is Mary
7 Brosnahan. I'm a member of Community Board 5 and I'm
8 a resident of the district.

9 I'm here today to share Community
10 Board 5's position on the GPP as it relates to
11 housing. CB 5, as has been said many times,
12 appreciates that the Empire State Corporation has
13 made modifications to the original project, but
14 these proposed modifications are willfully
15 inadequate. CB 5 continues to strongly object to the
16 proposal based on these grounds.

17 Number one, the GPP proposes no
18 guaranteed residential development in CB 5. We
19 believe that such a large area of our district
20 should not be demolished, but if it is, it must be
21 replaced with substantial units of truly affordable
22 residential development as well as a community
23 facility. Not only in CB 4's lot number one, but
24 elsewhere throughout the project plan.

25 CB 5 vigorously advocated for

1 affordable housing as well as community space during
2 the scope of work comment period. We stand by this
3 commitment and believe this project should include a
4 large community facility to serve the needs of the
5 residential population as well as our fellow New
6 Yorkers who are sleeping rough in the area. We
7 renew our call for the creation of guarantee of
8 truly affordable permanent housing as part of this
9 development.

10 Once again for the record, the
11 current plan has no guarantee of affordable housing
12 in CB 5. The current proposal only includes an
13 option for such housing at the discretion of the
14 developer.

15 Second, the revised GPP creates a
16 framework for the condemnation of residential and
17 commercial buildings. CB 5 cannot support
18 displacement of hundreds of New Yorkers through the
19 mechanism of imminent domain.

20 Further, CB 5 recognizes that
21 under the current framework, condemnation would
22 likely be done by a federal entity under NEPA, which
23 provides the least amount of the protection to
24 displace residents. It would eliminate scores of
25 rent-stabilized apartments and displace at-risk

1 senior residents. The sweeping destruction of
2 affordable housing is a direct opposition to a
3 primary goal of CB 5, which is to generate and
4 preserve affordable housing in our district.

5 Third, CB 5 is concerned about the
6 lack of outreach that has prevented proper community
7 engagement. Residents in and around the project must
8 be consulted with dual language outreach as needed.
9 It's unclear how many current residents are even
10 aware of this massive land use proposal and its
11 potential displacement impact.

12 Finally, under this proposal, the
13 Hotel Pennsylvania, a historic building eligible for
14 the National Register, should be prioritized for
15 conversion into deeply affordable and supportive
16 housing. The Hotel Penn could provide the robust
17 housing component this proposal desperately needs
18 and also provide the stability to our built
19 environment.

20 Just to underscore in conclusion,
21 the proposed revised project only provides framework
22 for additional market rate commercial use with
23 minimal affordable housing component and a potential
24 weak alternative. It does not serve civic and land
25 use purpose and it does not provide a framework for

1 realistic revenue generation.

2 On the contrary, like the recently
3 developed Hudson Yards, there's a strong possibility
4 that this project would become another serious
5 taxpayer liability. Overall, this project fails to
6 address affordable housing, perhaps the most
7 pressing land use issue facing New York City. The
8 adverse impact --

9 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
10 your testimony. We need to move on to our speaker,
11 so that everyone will have a chance to this evening.
12 Our next five speakers will include:

13 Sam Levy;
14 Theresa Westerdahl;
15 Julie Finch;
16 Vincent Sigurdson;
17 And Diego Barberena;

18 First on that list will be Sam
19 Levy. You must unmute yourself and speak if you're
20 present.

21 (No response.)

22 THE HEARING OFFICER: I believe
23 that Sam Levy is no longer on the -- in the hearing,
24 so we'll move to Theresa Westerdahl. Terra
25 Westerdahl, you may unmute yourself and let us know

1 when you're ready to speak. One more call for
2 Theresa Westerdahl. If you are ready to speak,
3 please unmute yourself.

4 (No response.)

5 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. Then
6 we'll move to the next speaker, Julie Finch. Julie
7 Finch, you may unmute yourself and let us know what
8 you're ready to begin. I can see you. You can start
9 when you're ready.

10 MS. FINCH: Hi, I'm Julie Finch and
11 I am the other cochair of the Hopper Gibbons
12 Underground Railroad on 29th Street between 8th and
13 9th Avenues and that is part of the Lamartine Place
14 Historic District, which is a beautiful area of
15 Greek revival buildings with gardens in front of
16 them.

17 I want to say that I saw the
18 pillars from the original Penn Station below Penn
19 Station. They are still there and also, I want to
20 say -- I've been taking notes on what everybody
21 said -- I want to say that the Martinique Motel is
22 being restored in the area. This is Robert Moses
23 style, a nightmare.

24 McKim, Mead and White have done
25 this beautiful building, the Hotel Pennsylvania,

1 which I agree with Mary Brosnahan would be suitable
2 for affordable housing, but this is "cultural
3 vandalism" to quote somebody. It's undemocratic --
4 an undemocratic plan. Jane Jacobs is rolling over
5 in her grave tonight.

6 This is arrogant like the previous
7 governor who started this plan. We need ULURP. We
8 need decision making that is in front of and not
9 behind the scenes. We need adaptive reuse. "This
10 project is madness," to quote somebody else and the
11 infrastructure bill of President Biden would help
12 with rebuilding Penn Station and moving the Madison
13 Square Garden to another area.

14 I deplore seven Vornado office
15 buildings. They are not an improvement to this
16 neighborhood. I have lived here for 45 years and I
17 am against this project. Thank you very much.

18 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you
19 very much for your testimony. The next registered
20 speaker on our list is Vincent Sigurdson. I believe
21 Vincent Sigurdson may no longer be in the hearing,
22 but Vincent Sigurdson, if you are hear, please
23 unmute yourself and let us know.

24 (No response.)

25 THE HEARING OFFICER: Well, we'll

1 move onto the next name, which is Diego Barberena.
2 Diego Barberena, if you're present please unmute
3 yourself.

4 (No response.)

5 THE HEARING OFFICER:. Okay. Then
6 we will move to the next set of five names. I'll
7 read those names out first:

8 Denis Pupovic;

9 Anthony Madalo;

10 C.M. Pyle;

11 Amy Harlib;

12 Randall Jandak;

13 That's the next five speakers.

14 First on that list will be Denis Pupovic. You may
15 unmute yourself and let us know when you're ready to
16 begin.

17 (No response.)

18 THE HEARING OFFICER: I believe
19 that Denis Pupovic is no longer with us, so our next
20 registered speaker is Anthony Madalo.

21 MR. MADALO: Can you hear me?

22 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes, you may
23 start when you're ready.

24 MR. MADALO: Thank you. I
25 appreciate that and thank you for the opportunity to

1 comment on the proposed Penn Station project. My
2 name is Anthony Madalo and I'm actually President of
3 Local 157, which is the carpenters union. We
4 oversee 8,000 thousand carpenters that live and work
5 in New York. Carpenters of Local 157 South has a
6 legitimate stakeholders in our community.

7 The Penn Station project has the
8 potential to deliver thousands of good paying jobs
9 for members, which also provides medical for their
10 family for our members working and their employees
11 for the next two decades. Furthermore, the Penn
12 Station project as articulated in the current scope
13 and will creat a clean, modern and healthy transit
14 station infrastructure in and around Penn Station,
15 which will attract businesses and people from around
16 the world.

17 There should be -- there is no
18 argument when it comes to building a better Penn
19 Station. New York City merits a world class
20 transportation hub that reflects its global stature.
21 We applaud the progressive innovative leadership
22 that is driving the Penn Station project forward.

23 Furthermore at a time when New
24 York City is in an economic recovery due to the
25 recent Covid pandemic, such a project could be just

1 the catalyst we need to jumpstart our economy and
2 especially for our members. Our members are based
3 off of hours worked, hours paid, so during the
4 pandemic, they were severely hurt. So this could
5 really kickstart everyone to getting back into a
6 regular, normal life.

7 These are the reasons stated above
8 that Carpenters Local 157 and the affiliates of the
9 New York City District Council of Carpenters are
10 speaking on behalf of its members. We strongly
11 support and vote in favor of moving forward with the
12 Penn Station project with minimal restrictions or
13 delay. We stand at the ready as community
14 activists, community stakeholders, as construction
15 workers to aid in the facilitation of the
16 expedition of the new project's plan. Thank you and
17 everybody have a safe night and the wonderful
18 holiday.

19 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
20 your testimony. Our next speaker is C.M. Pyle.
21 C.M. Pyle, if you are present and would like to
22 speak, please unmute yourself and let us know.

23 MS. PYLE: I am. Hello.

24 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes, thank
25 you so much. If you'll permit me to say one thing

1 before you begin your testimony, you will, of
2 course, still have your full amount of time. I would
3 like to let everyone know and I will say this in the
4 chat as well that we, again, have an ASL interpreter
5 and so you may -- excuse me. If you are in need of
6 ASL interpretation, you may scroll until you find
7 our new interpreter whose tag line says "ASL
8 interpreter" and you may pin that spotlight.

9 That person said that you can see
10 it and I'll put that in the chat as well. In the
11 meantime, thank you for your patience. C.M. Pyle,
12 you may begin when you're ready.

13 MS. PYLE: Thank you. I don't see
14 see myself.

15 THE HEARING OFFICER: We can hear
16 you if you just want to go ahead.

17 MS. PYLE: I had put my screen on.
18 Well, anyway I would like to associate myself very
19 strongly with Lynn Ellsworth and Sam Turvey and
20 Alexander (sic) Washburn, Barry Caro and those who
21 have a historical sense of our city.

22 I am -- I was born in Manhattan
23 and I'm very, very tied to my city even though I
24 spend a lot of time abroad. My time abroad is far
25 more aesthetically satisfying I'm afraid than my

1 time -- especially my time in Penn Station, which is
2 occasional.

3 Aesthetics matter. We are
4 aesthetic beings. We are not -- we are social
5 beings, but we are also keenly aware of our
6 aesthetic surroundings and some of the architecture
7 in that neighborhood, which I do know, is
8 remarkable. I've just been looking at it and
9 photographing it recently. The other thing is that
10 it is a neighborhood full of artisanry. Still a
11 little bit of artisanry is left from the -- of the
12 government district, which was very, very prominent
13 there for decades.

14 The idea of human scale city to
15 rebuild Penn Station is apparently a cheaper idea
16 than any of these proposals the Vornado affair and
17 other rather undistinguished architectural plans
18 that I've seen. The idea of rebuilding Penn Station
19 as it -- more or less as it was, but with escalators
20 or things that would improve it -- well, I knew it
21 as child of course and is a very good one and
22 especially since it would also bring jobs to the
23 union employees. They seem to not realize that
24 these -- that any improvement to Penn Station will
25 bring jobs to union employees.

1 Another thing is that the towers
2 in our city have now -- apart from their lack of
3 distinction -- have now become a danger for birds
4 who migrate through our city regularly twice a year
5 at least and smash themselves to death into these
6 glass towers, which are completely undistinguished
7 in their architectural pretenses.

8 So there are many, many reasons
9 why this project is ill considered and should be
10 abolished, abandoned, more well thought and
11 carefully planned and with our input, those of us
12 who are New Yorkers and who care deeply about our
13 city. And do remember that haste makes waste.

14 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you
15 very much for your testimony. Our next speaker will
16 be -- I believe we have a few speakers who had
17 registered who are no longer with us. I'll read
18 their names and if you hear your name and you -- if
19 you see your name on the screen now and you would
20 still like to speak, please let us know.

21 The list of names is -- well, we
22 still have -- our next speaker will be Amy Harlib --
23 who I believe may not be on the hearing now -- and
24 Randall Jandak. Do we have either Amy Harlib or
25 Randall Jandak? Please let us know.

1 (No response.)

2 THE HEARING OFFICER: Before I read
3 the next five names, I'd like to just draw your
4 attention to something that I also just put in the
5 the chat and to remind you that we do, again, have
6 live ASL interpretation if you find that -- the
7 person with the name ASL interpreter and we will
8 have this interpretation for the duration of the
9 hearing this evening.

10 Please note that also we will
11 still hold another hearing session in January to
12 make sure that all that would like to provide oral
13 testimony are provided an opportunity to do so and
14 ASL interpretation will be provided at that time as
15 well. We'll continue now with hearing testimony
16 with ASL interpretation.

17 Okay. Our next list of
18 speakers -- the next five registered speakers
19 include:

20 Allie Ryan;

21 Erika Peterson -- excuse me;

22 Marilyn Taylor;

23 Damyanti Radheshwar;

24 And Rebecca Sanin.

25 I believe that the first several

1 of those registered speakers may not be in the
2 hearing at this time, so Allie Ryan, Erica Peterson
3 and Marilyn Taylor, if you are in the hearing,
4 please let us know at this time.

5 (No response.)

6 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. Our
7 next speaker will be Damyanti Radheshwar. Please
8 unmute yourself and you may begin when you're ready.

9 MS. RADHESHWAR: Hello.

10 THE HEARING OFFICER: Hi, we can
11 hear you.

12 MS. RADHESHWAR: Oh, great. Okay.
13 My name is Damyanti Radheshwar, architect and urban
14 planner. I have been following what's happening on
15 the proposal that has been happening at the Penn
16 Station area. I also commute these days from Long
17 Island to Penn Station, so I'm very familiar with
18 the conditions of Penn Station.

19 So I understand as we all do that
20 this project is really two projects. It does not
21 address rules of the existing Penn Station itself.
22 [Zoom inaudible was never made for the plan -- for
23 the solution. I also realize that it will be hugely
24 concerning for all of us about the loss of the
25 embodied carbon when the existing historic fabric is

1 destroyed to make room for the new skyscrapers. The
2 skyscrapers do not make sustainable urban design.

3 The New York Post had all the
4 displacement concerns of the local population around
5 the Penn Station. In the Bronx they are solved.
6 This doesn't have to happen. Before any of the
7 urban fabric is destroyed in the process of -- in
8 the name of new development, I think it really
9 behooves us to look at the ReThinkNYC study about
10 the through-running trains that we adopted. The
11 through-running trains do not require the
12 destruction of the block south of the 31st Street.

13 So the planners and the government
14 agencies and all need to authorize at this point
15 funding for creating study for the Penn Station
16 without the destruction of the fabric south of the
17 Penn Station. Thank you.

18 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
19 your testimony. Our next speaker on our list will
20 be Rebecca Sanin. Rebecca Sanin, if you are in the
21 hearing, please unmute yourself or let us know via
22 chat.

23 (No response.)

24 THE HEARING OFFICER: No. And then
25 I believe we have our next list that we can go ahead

1 and read. I believe some of them also may not be in
2 the hearing, but the next list of registered
3 speakers includes:

4 Laura Shapiro;

5 Pamela Wolff;

6 Richard Gilligan Jr.;

7 Diana Douglas;

8 And Lisa Sorin.

9 Laura Shapiro, Pamela Wolff,
10 Richard Gilligan Jr., Diana Douglas, if any of these
11 registered speakers is in the hearing at this time
12 please unmute yourself or let us know via the chat.

13 (No response.)

14 THE HEARING OFFICER: If not, then
15 we'll go to Lisa Sorin. Lisa Sorin, you may unmute
16 yourself and go ahead and speak.

17 MS. SORIN: Hello.

18 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes, we can
19 hear you.

20 MS. SORIN: Sorry about that. My
21 connection is -- my internet connection is not
22 great.

23 THE HEARING OFFICER: That's fine.
24 You can leave your camera off.

25 MS. SORIN: Yeah, I've been trying,

1 but I'm going to leave it off. I appreciate the
2 time. My name is Lisa Sorin and I am the President
3 of the Bronx Chamber of Commerce. The Bronx, like
4 all of our city's boroughs, is recovering from a
5 pandemic that has threatened our economic
6 livelihoods and largely -- excuse me -- and largely
7 minority and low-income driven work force.

8 One of the keys to getting the
9 Bronx back on its feet is through bold
10 infrastructure initiatives that will uplift our
11 communities. Bronx sites must be included in the
12 recovery efforts of our city and there is no more
13 important project for New York City than fixing Penn
14 Station. For too long, Penn Station and the larger
15 Penn district have been blights on our city with
16 real negative impacts on our economy and work force.

17 The new Penn Station proposal
18 offers a clear solution to an infrastructure and
19 quality of life problem that has plagued us for
20 decades. Thousands of Bronx sites commute to and
21 from Manhattan everyday, many of them passing
22 through Penn Station. Yet what exists today is not
23 adequate for commuters. We need navigable safe,
24 equable infrastructure to reach our full economic
25 potential.

1 Governor Hochul's leadership and
2 vision will transform the Penn district into a
3 modern, efficient business district for the workers
4 of New York from every borough and beyond. If the
5 pandemic taught us one thing, it's that workers must
6 come first. This proposal prioritizes that.

7 Capacity at Penn station has not
8 expanded in decades, despite demand more than
9 tripling. Pedestrians are crammed into tight,
10 confined, poorly-lit corridors creating unsafe and
11 uncomfortable commuting environments. New Yorkers
12 should be safe when they commute to work. It is our
13 responsibility at leaders.

14 Overcrowding is a serious issue
15 that has led to delays and increased commute times
16 causing real countless dollars in lost revenues and
17 wages for workers and businesses alike. A new Penn
18 station will change that, creating thousands of jobs
19 and improving thousands of livelihoods.

20 The impacts of a fully realized
21 Penn Station complex will reach Bronx sites
22 immediately. New jobs, improved commuting habit and
23 an overall increased quality of life are unbeatable.
24 Through Penn station access, Metro-North will
25 eventually link East Bronx with Penn Station

1 creating a more seamless accessible way of commuting
2 for thousands of Bronx workers.

3 Four fully accessible Metro-North
4 stations will be created at Hunts Point,
5 Parkchester, Morris Park and Co-op City. This is a
6 project of regional significance at a time when all
7 eyes are on New York City's recovery. The commute
8 from Co-op City to Penn Station currently is 75
9 minutes. This will cut to 25 minutes. That is a
10 time that will be returned to Bronxites to spend in
11 their communities.

12 Few counties in New York -- in the
13 United States have been hit harder by the pandemic
14 than the Bronx and there is a long history of
15 leaving the Bronx out of our City's most ambitious
16 projects. Thousands of Bronxites will benefit
17 directly from this proposal and the economic relief
18 this plan will provide is incalculable as the Bronx
19 works to recover and rebuild from the devastation
20 brought on by the pandemic.

21 We must do everything in our power
22 to make the new vision for Penn Station complex a
23 reality. I stand ground with my fellow Bronxites
24 and New Yorkers in strong support of this project.

25 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for

1 your testimony. We'll move now to give some other
2 speakers the opportunity to speak. Our -- the next
3 five speakers on our list that have registered to
4 speak are:

5 Joel Lobenthal;
6 Kathryn Paulsen;
7 Sherry Cole;
8 Matthias Hess;
9 Caitlin Cahill.

10 I believe that I'm going to call
11 again -- some speakers may no longer be in the
12 hearing. If Joel Lobenthal, Kathryn Paulsen or
13 Sherry Cole, if you are present, please unmute
14 yourself or reach out via chat.

15 (No response.)

16 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. Then
17 our next speaker will be Matthias Hess. Matthias
18 Hess, you may unmute yourself and let us know when
19 you're ready to begin.

20 (No response.)

21 THE HEARING OFFICER: Matthias
22 Hess, we're going to move onto the next speaker at
23 this time. Our next speaker is Caitlin Cahill.
24 Caitlin Cahill, if you would like -- there you are.

25 MS. CAHILL: Hello.

1 THE HEARING OFFICER: You can begin
2 when you're ready.

3 MS. CAHILL: Hi. Hello. Thank you
4 so much. Thanks for the opportunity to comment. My
5 name is Caitlin Cahill and I live at Penn South,
6 which is part of mutual redevelopment houses, which
7 is union housing, which is a limited equity
8 cooperative where over 5,000 people.

9 And I lived here in the 1980s as a
10 high school student. My high school graduation was
11 at Madison Square Garden. I took the train to my
12 high school from Penn Station everyday. This is my
13 community. I care about it and I'm so humbled to
14 hear all of the beautiful testimonies that so many
15 people's voices are missing.

16 Somebody said I think Jane Jacobs
17 in rolling in her grave. We all know this. This is
18 kind of like a ghost haunting nightmare to be doing
19 this at Penn Station and I'm grateful to everyone
20 talking about displacement, but it brings me to
21 think about another person rolling in his grave:
22 Bayard Rustin, the great late civil rights organizer
23 who lived at Penn South and was a housing organizer.
24 Economic rights, housing rights or civil rights.

25 And let's talk about housing,

1 especially in the pandemic, and displacement and so
2 I appreciate the people whose homes are going to be
3 taken over and destroyed and demolished by eminent
4 domain, but this also has ripple effects on our
5 whole community. And just the other week, there was
6 a report that the median bedroom -- one bedroom was
7 \$5,000 dollars in Chelsea and so we have been
8 gentrified and disinvested.

9 The eviction moratorium is about
10 to expire and we're talking about billion of dollars
11 of public investment? Let's think about NYCHA,
12 Chelsea, Elliot, Fulton Houses. Where are they
13 tonight? Did they even know this meeting was
14 happening, you know? This matters because public
15 housing has been starved of investment and
16 infrastructure and our community is home to so many
17 unhoused people because we're in a housing crisis.

18 We need social housing, work force
19 development, not office space. I mean, come on.
20 We're not fools. We're New Yorkers. Where's the
21 public? Where's the ULURP process? What? I mean,
22 this is like check box participation. This is not
23 genuine participation.

24 So government officials, we must
25 -- you must speak out. This is a land grab. Yes,

1 we're in desperate need of a Penn Station of the
2 21st century, not a basement Penn Station. We want
3 the Hudson -- the Amtrak Hudson Tunnel gateway
4 project. We have to build back better
5 infrastructure.

6 This is -- let's separate the two.
7 Invest in Penn Station, not in Vornado. Let's
8 create union jobs, affordable housing, not corporate
9 development. This is corruption, plain and simple
10 just like Hudson Yards a few blocks to the west,
11 billions of dollars to fund private development.

12 Eric Adams, Governor Hochul, you
13 can do better. Do not sell the city away to a [Zoom
14 inaudible] for real estate state, not to Vornado.
15 We know that they line the pockets of Cuomo. How
16 about you? Adams, this is your chance. Please come
17 here and demonstrate that you're for the people,
18 that you're for affordable housing.

19 Let's not do Moses here. We need
20 a public process. We need a ULURP and we need
21 sunshine on this appeal.

22 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
23 your testimony. If you'd like to submit additional
24 testimony, I will remind everyone you may submit it
25 in writing via email or U.S. Postal Service mail to

1 the Empire State Development addresses that are
2 shown periodically on your screen.

3 The next set of registered
4 speakers is:

5 Christine Youngberg;

6 Richard Ronner;

7 Charles Ramirez;

8 Layla Treat;

9 And Robert Friedman.

10 Christine Youngberg, if you are
11 present in the hearing, please let us know.

12 (No response.)

13 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. We'll
14 move to Richard Ronner. Richard Ronner, you may
15 unmute yourself and let us know when you're ready to
16 speak. I see you.

17 MR. RONNER: Hi. Can you hear me?

18 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

19 MR. RONNER: Yes. Okay. Well, I
20 think -- I'm just amazed at the testimony that I've
21 heard. I've learned so much. I'm new to the issue.
22 I want to thank all the people who've done all the
23 research and time and energy and committed their
24 lives to this. I guess I have my questions and
25 concerns, too.

1 Why is the State preempting the
2 City's land use process to push a plan of this
3 magnitude through. It feels quite insulting and
4 dismissive to the City. I suspect we know or we
5 assume the answer that this plan has already been
6 bought and paid for.

7 I don't live in the Penn Station
8 area. I live in Queens, but I love to walk. I've
9 been in the City for 33 years. I love to walk
10 around the City and that area, it has such beautiful
11 buildings with stonework that people carved carved.

12 There are glass skyscrapers that
13 obliterate the sky and the sun and the clouds. They
14 don't cut it. They don't do it and they don't
15 supply what people need, which is housing. And this
16 is just what everybody has said and the City barely
17 needs more office space now and perhaps into the
18 future.

19 I understand from what I've
20 learned tonight that the purpose of this whole
21 project, the transportation has barely been
22 addressed and not transparently at all. This is --
23 unfortunately, the corruption that we have in our
24 history is still here.

25 So I oppose the proposal as it is

1 and I stand with this Human Scale New York and
2 that's my statement.

3 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
4 your testimony. Our next speaker, do we have
5 Charles Ramirez or Layla Treat? If either of you is
6 present in the hearing, please let us know.

7 (No response.)

8 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. Then
9 we will move to our next speaker, Katherine -- no
10 excuse me, Robert Friedman. Robert Friedman, if
11 you're present in the hearing, please let us know.

12 (No response.)

13 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. At
14 this time, we're moving onto the five next
15 registered speakers. We will continue with these
16 speakers until 10 o'clock. At 10 o'clock, we will
17 take a brief 10-minute break, so that our
18 stenographer and ASL interpreter has a rest to keep
19 up with the quality of their work, but we'll begin
20 with this list and we'll get as far as we can until
21 10 o'clock and then we'll take a break.

22 Our next speaker is Katherine
23 Tosiello. Katherine Tosiello, please unmute
24 yourself and let us now when you're ready to begin.
25 Yes, Katherine Tosiello, I believe you -- you may

1 unmute yourself and speak if you'd like to provide
2 testimony. I'm sorry. You're on mute now. Can you
3 press that button to unmute?

4 MS. TOSIELLO: I'm sorry. Okay.
5 Can you hear me now?

6 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

7 MS. TOSIELLO: Okay. My comments
8 will be very brief because I have learned so much
9 tonight and I really appreciate all that has been
10 said. And I do want to say that of course I don't
11 think there's been one person who's spoken tonight
12 who is opposed to improving Penn Station. Of course
13 we want Penn station improved. Of course we want to
14 plan for the future of transportation. I agree with
15 everything that's going on underground.

16 I am the author of a historic
17 fiction that is set in New York City in 1875 and I
18 mention it because when I wrote that book just four
19 years ago, I was able to walk around the West 20s
20 and the West 30s and imagine what was happening in
21 1875 in New York City at that time. There's a
22 chapter even about the Hopper Gibbons house, which
23 was mentioned earlier today.

24 And so I believe that we need with
25 this project a complete cultural and environmental

1 reanalysis because I do not believe that it has been
2 done adequately. I say this because the demolition
3 of the St. John the Evangelist Church and the 32nd
4 Street skybridge are apparently goners with this
5 whole plan. And these are two things that are so
6 very historically important and they're treasured
7 parts of New York City culture and eight gleaming
8 glass towers are not the answer to urban renewal.
9 It did you see not make our city livable.

10 We want to repurpose. We want to
11 include. We want to preserve and eight glass towers
12 aren't necessary. Why don't we start with four and
13 keep St. Johns and the skybridge? That's my
14 comments. Thank you so much to all.

15 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
16 your testimony. Our next speaker will be Thomas
17 Colon. Thomas Colon, if you're present mock trial
18 hearing please feel free to unmute yourself and let
19 us know when you're ready to begin.

20 (No response.)

21 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. Our
22 next registered speaker is Justin Sachs. Justin
23 Sachs, if you're present in the hearing, you may
24 unmute yourself to speak.

25 (No response.)

1 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. We've
2 move onto our next speaker, who I believe may have
3 already spoken, Alexandros Impagliazzo. I could be
4 wrong, but if Alexandros Impagliazzo is present in
5 the hearing, please let us know. Alexandros
6 Impagliazzo, you may unmute yourself if you'd like
7 to speak.

8 (No response.)

9 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. We'll
10 move to the next speaker: Tokumbo Siuzdak. If
11 Tokumbo Siuzdak is in the hearing, please let us
12 know.

13 (No response.)

14 THE HEARING OFFICER: All right.
15 We will move to our next list of five speakers of
16 whom the first person is:

17 Ralph Osorio;

18 And then Russ Dantzler;

19 Steve Marshall;

20 Christopher Larsen;

21 And Joseph Hung.

22 Ralph Osorio, if you're present in
23 the hearing please unmute yourself and let us know
24 when you're ready to speak.

25 MR. OSORIO: Can you hear me?

1 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes. There
2 you are.

3 MR. OSORIO: Okay. Thank you.
4 Good evening. My name is Ralph Osorio and I am here
5 on the behalf of my union 32BJ and the 85,000
6 building service workers that 32BJ represents in New
7 York to express our support for this GPP. 32BJ
8 supports recent developers who are invested in our
9 communities where they build.

10 I'm happy to report that Vornado,
11 the key developer in the Penn Station redevelopment
12 area, has credible commitments to create prevailing
13 wage jobs for building service workers. The
14 prevailing wage is a transformative standard for
15 working people, made it possible for a family
16 sustaining income, a pension, comprehensive health
17 care and more.

18 These are the kinds of jobs that
19 New York City needs in the wake of the COVID-19
20 pandemic and will be a source of opportunity for the
21 thousands of working class people whose livelihoods
22 has historically depended on Manhattan central
23 business district. Vornado has a track record of
24 responsible employment at the existing builders in
25 New York City and we are confident that they will

1 continue to uphold good standards in the context of
2 the proposed redevelopment.

3 As someone who's lived and worked
4 in New York City for over 42 years, I have
5 important -- excuse me, understand how important a
6 good job and affordable rent can be. 32BJ estimates
7 that this redevelopment will provide hundreds of new
8 prevailing wage building service jobs as well as
9 thousands of additional employment opportunities in
10 a part of the City that is in critical need of
11 economic recovery.

12 We respectfully urge the ESD to
13 approve it. Thank you for listening to me.

14 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you
15 very much for your -- excuse me. One moment. Thank
16 you for your testimony. We -- I'm going to reread
17 this list, but we need to just double check. If you
18 are actually present in the Zoom and you hear your
19 last name called, please let us know. Yes. So --
20 excuse me. So if we could go back -- excuse me.

21 Sorry. That was Ralph Osorio.
22 Our next speaker will be -- our next set of speakers
23 are:

24 Russ Dantzler;

25 Steve Marshall;

1 Christopher Larsen;
2 And Joseph Hung.
3 Russ Dantzler, if you're present,
4 you may let us know.

5 (No response.)

6 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. Then
7 the next name on your list will be Steve Marshall.
8 Steve Marshall -- oh, here's Russ Dantzler. Great.
9 Russ Dantzler, you may unmute yourself and let us
10 know when you're ready. Yes, you can start. We
11 should hear you.

12 MR. DANTZLER: Now you can hear
13 me?

14 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

15 MR. DANTZLER: Okay. I had been
16 hitting unmute every moment while you were speaking
17 my name and it was only just allowed, so sorry. I
18 appear to be a bit ignorant there and I hope I
19 wasn't. Anyway, thanks. I've lived decades just
20 north of Penn, my grandson is from [Zoom inaudible]
21 and loves New York history and to quote a woman I
22 wish were here, she said, "Is it not cruel to let
23 our city die by degrees, stripped of all her proud
24 monuments, until there will be nothing left of all
25 her history and beauty to inspire our children?"

1 That was Jackie 46 years ago.

2 I think she would approve along
3 with me of everything that we think New York City
4 has to say. I think we should scrap the proposals
5 that are on the table and start over by moving MSG
6 and SAP to build a somewhat monument on the original
7 foundations. It's got to happen somewhere and from
8 an engineering point of view, it makes sense to put
9 it right where it was.

10 It doesn't make sense to do
11 otherwise. We do not need more office space. We do
12 need to reuse what we have to be somewhat
13 environmentally responsibility. We should save
14 every structure that predates 1950 or so. I
15 couldn't find one useless building in that area.
16 Again, I've lived here for decades.

17 The hotels could be affordable
18 housing, but we just have to get back to adaptive
19 reuse and not the clear cutting of our history.
20 Jane Jacobs and Jackie should be here to speak.
21 Thank you.

22 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you
23 very much for your testimony. Our next speaker --
24 I'll invite Steve Marshall again. Steve Marshall, if
25 you are present, please let us know.

1 (No response.)

2 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. At
3 this time, we're actually going to call -- oh,
4 here's Steve Marshall. Thank you very much. I
5 believe you're on mute. Are you able to unmute
6 yourself?

7 (No response.)

8 THE HEARING OFFICER: Steve
9 Marshall, I can see you, but I believe you might not
10 have your audio turned on. Are you using a phone, a
11 cellphone, for your audio?

12 (No response.)

13 THE HEARING OFFICER: My apologies.
14 I'm not able to turn on your audio at this time,
15 Mr. Marshall. I believe -- yes, I believe you may
16 have joined with a phone. If you can unmute on your
17 phone, we should be able to hear you. Okay.

18 Mr. Marshall, I'm sorry. We have
19 your name twice and we've invited you to unmute, but
20 we're -- okay. Try -- Mr. Marshall, if you're
21 listening on your phone, can you try pressing *6 on
22 your phone?

23 Oh, here you come. You're
24 connecting to audio on your computer now, so just
25 bear with us a moment. We should be able to hear

1 you. Yes. Here you come. All right.

2 Now you should see a button asking
3 you to unmute. Can you look at your computer one
4 more time? Great. Now we should be able to hear
5 you. Okay. Mr. Marshall, can you try once more
6 speaking?

7 (No response.)

8 THE HEARING OFFICER: All right.
9 I'm sorry. We seem to be having some technical
10 difficulties with your audio, so we'll need to --
11 we'll need to move onto the next person at this time.

12 MR. MARSHALL: I'm unmuted. Okay.
13 How about now?

14 THE HEARING OFFICER: There you
15 go. I can hear you.

16 MR. MARSHALL: Oh my god. Okay.
17 You can hear me now?

18 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

19 MR. MARSHALL: Okay. I can't hear
20 myself, but I want to say first of all after five or
21 six hours of this, it's somewhat infuriating to hear
22 people talk about the jobs they're going to get
23 while they knock my building down that I've been
24 living in for 46 years. I'm disabled. I'm a
25 senior. My son has cerebral palsy. He's in a

1 wheelchair since birth. He's 43 years old. This is
2 our home for 46 years.

3 This block was also called music
4 street and when I moved into my building in 1975,
5 Tommy Ramone lived downstairs. It was the most
6 vibrant music street in the city, okay? 90 percent
7 of the people that live on that block are artists.
8 New York is always talking about how they're trying
9 to bring artists to New York. Now they're squeezing
10 us out, which is what they always do.

11 All these people that think
12 about -- all of these people shouldn't even be
13 calling in saying they're getting jobs from the
14 union. They'll get jobs anyway. At Penn Station --
15 and it looks like they've almost done it on purpose
16 downstairs -- there's a sign on Penn Station that
17 says, "Vornado campus." Gee, I wonder who's making
18 money off of that.

19 You know, there's a glut of
20 hideous towers. They built a tower on 11th Avenue
21 and 31st that blocks the sunlight even coming to us.
22 Now that's one tower. You're going to have eight
23 acres of shade, okay? The town looks like blade
24 runner in Dubai, okay? That's the -- okay.

25 All the small businesses in the

1 Covid managed to stay open on our block, which is a
2 block filled of [Zoom inaudible] deck, of beautiful
3 buildings, okay? When I moved in, you know, when we
4 moved in in that block in 1975, nobody wanted to
5 live in the City.

6 We were the pioneers. Now they're
7 trying to squeeze us out and knock our buildings
8 down.

9 Can you imagine all these people
10 that are saying this is a great idea? If their
11 building in their neighborhood and 30 buildings in
12 their neighborhood were getting knocked down, so it
13 could pay for the renovation of Penn station? It's
14 not even for the -- it's not even part of the
15 renovation of the trains. It's just to pay for it.
16 Okay.

17 These are -- first of all Hochul
18 just inherited this from Cuomo who obviously got
19 millions in [Zoom inaudible]. Everybody's acting
20 like it's new leadership. This has been going on
21 forever. All right. What else? You know, there's
22 just disenfranchising hundreds, if not thousands, of
23 people that have businesses and have been living on
24 these blocks for years. Those are our seniors.
25 These are not a bunch of kids who just moved in.

1 Anyway, listen, it's a land grab.
2 It's an obvious land grab. They destroyed the City
3 when they rezoned it with Bloomberg and Giuliani,
4 rezoned everything and they put giant towers
5 everywhere in the last 20 years.

6 It wasn't like this 20 years ago.
7 How did they get away with it? Now they're going to
8 destroy it and make Hudson Yards. Hudson Yards
9 didn't displace anyone. There was no people living
10 there. They're throwing people -- they're destroying
11 our homes. It's disgusting.

12 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
13 your testimony and thank you for bearing with us
14 through getting your sound going. All right. Our
15 next speaker on our list is Christopher Larsen.
16 Christopher Larsen, please let us know if you're
17 ready to speak.

18 (No response.)

19 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. At this
20 time I'll move onto Joseph Hung and then we do need
21 to -- we have a few people who we may have -- we
22 misspoke their first names, so we need to give those
23 folks an opportunity to speak and then we'll take a
24 short break.

25 Do we have Joseph Hung?

1 (No response.)

2 THE HEARING OFFICER: No? Okay. So
3 now I'll go back and ask if we Lizette Colon on the
4 hearing? Oh, Lizette Colon, yes. Thank you for your
5 patience. You may start when you're ready.

6 MS. COLON: Yes. I just want to --
7 I mean just listening to everybody here tonight, I'm
8 sure that many of you share the same sense of anger
9 and rage that Steve Marshall just expressed. I feel
10 for him as a resident of the area.

11 I live here in Penn South and I
12 have seen how this -- big buildings have invaded our
13 area. I can see it from my window and all the
14 lights are reminding me every single night of the
15 invasion of Chelsea by this big buildings that
16 they're proposing.

17 It's very sad for me also to hear
18 fellow union brothers talking about jobs and not
19 having in mind that they could have jobs when we
20 repair and reconstruct Penn Station, which we are
21 all in agreement that needs to be repaired, but we
22 cannot keep talking like we are the friends of
23 Vornado.

24 As a union fellow member, I resent
25 that and I really, really -- to Ralph Osorio and

1 Anthony Madalo, please don't do and to all the
2 elected officials here today that they were saying
3 if you do this and you do that and you do that, we
4 might consider it, especially our representative
5 Gottfried and all the people that he was
6 representing in his speech.

7 We cannot accept this plan. This
8 plan is wrong. Last night we had the chance, a
9 wonderful chance, to see all the buildings that
10 they're going to destroy. It was an incredible tool
11 that we were given. It was a gift and as a person
12 that has lived here for 35 years, I had never
13 noticed so many wonderful wonders that we have and
14 we are going to destroy them just for the sake of
15 what? Land grab.

16 And it's just like Governor
17 Hochul, if she is really, really a leader that she
18 says, that she's going to be different from the
19 former governor, then she has to -- she has to
20 change this plan and she has to go back to the table
21 because this is not real.

22 This is destruction, this is
23 demolition and you are destroying in the name of
24 what? Our city.

25 So I beg all the elected official

1 to listen to the community boards that have been
2 speaking here, people that care about our area, that
3 know our neighborhood, that know our needs, to
4 listen to them.

5 Otherwise this is just a farce.
6 This is just another public hearing that we're used
7 to that they just allow us to talk for one moment
8 and then you already have the decision made.

9 And that happened already in Penn
10 South. They took away one corner of us and just in
11 the haste, let's do it fast because we need to do
12 it. No, we don't need to do it. We really have to
13 think carefully because this is the future and we
14 should not be disappointed.

15 We should be reusing whatever we
16 have. Let's be creative and I know that the City of
17 New York has plenty of that.

18 So please stop the nonsense and go
19 back and govern with real clarity of what do we
20 need? Don't sell the land to the --

21 THE HEARING OFFICER: Great. Thank
22 you very much for your testimony. We will now move
23 to Laura Sachs. Laura Sachs, if you are on the
24 call -- I see your name -- you may unmute yourself
25 and let us know when you're ready. Laura Sachs, if

1 you'd like to speak, you -- there you are. Hi.

2 MS. SACHS: Hello.

3 THE HEARING OFFICER: Begin when
4 you're ready.

5 MS. SACHS: Thank you very much. I
6 was about to put on my pajamas. My name is Laura
7 Sachs. I'm an architect and an urban designer. I
8 grew up in Long Island and for many years
9 experienced firsthand how [Zoom inaudible] for a
10 daily commuter through Penn Station.

11 I think we all agree on the
12 importance of expanding and improving the transit
13 system in Penn Station. My initial response was
14 delight when I thought of development around Penn
15 station as many of the buildings in the area are
16 underutilized, but that's not a license to bulldoze
17 an entire block or several blocks and sacrifice
18 irreplaceable treasures like the Hotel Pennsylvania,
19 the original Penn Station power station, Gimbel's
20 Skybridge and The St. John the Baptist among several
21 other buildings.

22 I support urban development and I
23 support the Empire Station Development plan, but not
24 this plan. The current plan needs several
25 revisions. Design and development at this scale is

1 not correct and community input must be listened to.

2 Once we -- we need to make
3 revisions and keep making revisions until we get it
4 right. It's essential we get it right. We don't get
5 a do over once the demolition is done as we know all
6 too well from the destruction of the original Penn
7 Station replaced by Madison Square Garden. Yet here
8 we are again with the wrecking ball ready in the
9 name of progress and profit. The irony is tragic.

10 I strongly suggest we slow down,
11 involve community input, review the actual needs and
12 proposed benefits and revisit the disproportionate
13 amount of commercial space allocated and evaluate
14 the additional housing that would be provided, both
15 affordable and market rate. We need to investigate
16 the feasibility of relocating Madison Square Garden.

17 Old buildings are the key to
18 transforming a city, add visual and historic value
19 that cannot be sacrificed. We have to revisit this
20 plan and incorporate adaptive reuse and preserve the
21 details of craftsmanship and the priceless
22 architecture of a bygone era.

23 Please revise the plans to
24 preserve our history and still create an empire
25 station within this great city. Thank you.

1 THE HEARING OFFICER: Excuse me.
2 Thank you very much for your testimony. Our next --
3 for your next speaker, I'd like to invite Andrew
4 Impagliazzo. Andrew Impagliazzo, if you are present
5 in the hearing, please let us know. Unmute yourself
6 and you can speak.

7 (No response.)

8 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. I'll
9 move on then to Renzo (phonetic) Ramirez. Renzo
10 Ramirez, if you are present in the hearing, please
11 let us know.

12 MR. RAMIREZ: Yes. Can you guys
13 hear me and see me?

14 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes, we can.

15 MR. RAMIREZ: Okay. Sorry. I
16 was -- okay. I don't know if you guys can see me. I
17 can't really see myself. I'm going to just start,
18 so.

19 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes, Renzo
20 Ramirez, we can see and you may start when you're
21 ready.

22 MR. RAMIREZ: Okay. Cool. So good
23 evening. My name is Renzo Ramirez and I work as a
24 doorman. I'm here on behalf of my union 32BJ and
25 the 85,000 building service workers 32BJ represents

1 in New York City to express our support for the --
2 for this GPP.

3 We are enthusiastic about this
4 project, not only because it will create good jobs
5 that gives workers mobility and security, but also
6 because it stands to deliver many other public
7 benefits. To continue to thrive, New York City
8 needs and New Yorkers deserve world class
9 transportation infrastructure.

10 We know that the proposed
11 improvements to Penn Station will benefit working
12 New Yorkers like 32BJ members who rely heavily on
13 public transportation. In addition, we are
14 enthusiastic about the redevelopment's potential to
15 provide many new units of affordable housing in an
16 expensive part of Manhattan.

17 New Yorkers like 32BJ members need
18 quality housing they can afford located near
19 employment opportunities and public transit. We are
20 eager to work with other stakeholders to ensure that
21 any residential development built as a result of
22 this redevelopment comes with prevailing wage for
23 building service workers.

24 We hope that the State will make a
25 commitment to making this part of the final plan for

1 the development. We are confident that if done
2 right, this redevelopment will do much for workers
3 and the broader community. We respectfully urge ESD
4 to approve it. Thank you so much for your time.

5 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
6 your testimony. At this time, we are going to
7 make -- take a 10-minute break, so that our
8 hardworking stenographer and ASL interpreter will
9 have a break. So it is now -- the time is now
10 10:19. We will resume at 10:29.

11 We do have additional speakers and
12 you will be given the time to provide your testimony
13 after the break. We'll see you at -- actually now
14 it's 10:20, so we'll resume at 10:30. Thank you.

15 (Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

16 THE HEARING OFFICER: Good evening
17 and welcome back -- welcome back to the Penn Station
18 area redevelopment public hearing. We appreciate
19 your patience and we know that that is a long
20 process, but we very much appreciate everyone who
21 has stayed with us and is still -- and is willing
22 and looking forward to provide testimony still at
23 this evening.

24 I would call everyone's attention
25 to the ASL interpreter. If you are in need of the

1 instructions for finding and pinning, their screen
2 will be shown in just a moment.

3 In the meantime, we have another
4 list of five speakers, which will include:

5 Caroline Harris;

6 Sandy Reiburn;

7 Stephan Van Dam;

8 Mike Piccirillo;

9 Eamon Carey.

10 Caroline Harris, you may unmute
11 yourself and speak when you're ready.

12 MS. HARRIS: Well, thank you. It's
13 been a long night for all of us and I'm very happy
14 finally to have the opportunity to speak. My
15 appreciation to you, Ms. Frye, for your tenacity and
16 endurance here and to all the other people who are
17 participating, it's been very interesting and
18 informative.

19 I'm Caroline Harris, a partner in
20 the law firm of Goldman Harris. We represent the
21 owners of 421 7th Avenue and 155 West 33rd Street,
22 which is Block 809, lots 1 and 8. They are part of
23 site 6. These two lots have been held proudly by
24 one family for over two generations. My remarks
25 relate primarily to one aspect of the DEIS, the

1 neighborhood character study as it relates to my
2 client's buildings.

3 The two buildings on these lots
4 serve several retail tenants, sparrow being the most
5 recognized one, and over 70 businesses that desire
6 small offices. The businesses select 421 7th Avenue
7 due to the small size of the private offices,
8 typically 300 feet. Its proximity to the
9 transit-rich location is another reason for the
10 selection of this building and its modest rent
11 especially in comparison with newer and larger class
12 A buildings in the area.

13 It is a type of real estate
14 product that is becoming scarcer as the City
15 establishes new shiny centers for 21st century state
16 of the art office buildings with large size offices
17 and high rent. The proposed project threatens the
18 displacement of business that cannot thrive in such
19 buildings.

20 Though constructed in 1926 and
21 1936 respectably, these two older buildings, like my
22 mother, are not substandard or outmoded for the
23 needs of their tenants. They are not insanitary.
24 Ownership has been caring for them and investing in
25 them with alterations in 2014 and 2015.

1 It has upgraded the interior.
2 It's clearing violations and is designing new high
3 tech signage. Just because it is old or not
4 considered class A doesn't mean the building isn't
5 valuable. It serves the needs of an important
6 sector of New York's economically diverse building
7 -- business community.

8 We understand that the GPP does
9 not contemplate or commence a process that would
10 authorize ESDC's exercise of eminent domain with
11 respect to these properties. We would appreciate it
12 if ESDC would seek confirmation that such action is
13 not contemplated by MTA or any other state agency to
14 achieve the desired sub service transit improvement
15 or street widening.

16 We also understand that the GPP
17 does not require ownership to alter or redevelop its
18 properties and therefore it does not mandate the
19 owner's involvement. Nevertheless, as long-term
20 owners of this building in this district, my tenants
21 are happy to be involved to discuss with ESDC and
22 other stakeholders how their respective visions
23 could mesh to create the best outcome for the City.

24 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
25 your testimony and for your kind words. Our next

1 set of speakers may no longer be in the hearing, but
2 I want to call their names and ask them to -- ask
3 them to contact me if they are still planning to --
4 if they are present and would like to speak:

5 Sandy Reiburn;

6 Stephan or Stefan Van Dam;

7 Mike Piccirillo;

8 And Eamon Carey.

9 If you are present, you may unmute
10 yourself, you may message me through the chat or you
11 may email the help line -- the help email, which is
12 listed at the bottom of the screen,
13 help@publicworkspartners.com.

14 Okay. With that, I'll move to the
15 next set of five speakers, similarly some of these
16 folks -- so the next set of registered speakers
17 include:

18 Julia Campanelli;

19 James Sheeran;

20 Patrick Daly;

21 Chris Horsfield;

22 And Margaret McInroe.

23 These registered speakers may not
24 be in the hearing at this point, but I'll call the
25 names one more time and if you are present and would

1 like to speak, please unmute yourself, message me
2 through the chat or email at
3 help@publicworkspartners.com.

4 Julia Campanelli;

5 James Sheeran;

6 Patrick Daly;

7 Chris Horsfield;

8 Margaret McInroe.

9 (No response.)

10 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. We
11 will then move to our next set of five speakers.
12 The next set of registered speakers includes -- I'll
13 read all five and then we'll call on you -- I'll
14 call on the next speaker.

15 David Holowka;

16 Diana Stewart;

17 Jodie Ann Beatty;

18 Shan Jayakumar;

19 And Amy Cosmar.

20 The first speaker will be David
21 Holowka. You have unmute and speak when you're
22 ready.

23 MR. HOLOWKA: I'm David Holowka,
24 an architect with 37 years of experience in New York
25 City, mostly involving historic preservation.

1 Excuse me. Buried in appendix E of the DEIS is a
2 letter to Empire State Development from Beth
3 Cumming, Senior Historic Site Restoration
4 Coordinator of the State Historic Preservation
5 Office.

6 It says, "We note that the
7 proposed project includes demolition of historic
8 resources that are already known. As such, we would
9 recommend that ESD take a hard look at these
10 negative impacts to historic resources and seek ways
11 to avoid or minimize these effects." "Hard look" is
12 a colloquialism and Cumming's letter makes that
13 clear by putting the word in quotes.

14 A hard look doctrine is a
15 principal of administrative laws that says a court
16 can carefully review an administrative agency's
17 decision to ensure reasonable decision making. A
18 court is required to intervene if it becomes aware,
19 especially from an accomodation of danger signals
20 that the agency has not really taken a hard look at
21 the civilian problems.

22 It's alarming that the State
23 Historic Preservation Office should feel the need to
24 invoke this doctrine. There certainly are danger
25 signals in the draft EIS. For just one example, it

1 says there are no architectural resources located on
2 site 8 even though this site is entirely occupied by
3 the former Gimbels store by Daniel Burnham, one of
4 America's most influential architects and urban
5 planners.

6 Beth Cumming later wrote to ESD,
7 "we further note that the project scope of work
8 included an architectural resources analysis that
9 would presumably serve the remaining buildings
10 within the direct project area. We look forward to
11 receiving this survey when it's available."

12 Where is that completed
13 architectural resources survey? What does it say
14 about ESD's supposedly inclusive process that it
15 gives strict [Zoom inaudible] of the State's own
16 preservation Office.

17 The draft EIS even argues against
18 preserving some identified historic resources
19 because they, not the millions of square foot of new
20 construction, would block the project's creation of
21 open space. How's that for reasoned decision
22 making? Instead of pursuing resourceful,
23 imaginative ideas for developing the area without
24 bulldozing it, ESD seems bent on promoting the
25 Vornado front line that only alkenes tweet and make

1 new development feasible.

2 Until ESD provides a valid
3 accounting to the plan's historic resources and
4 proposes space to develop the area without their
5 wholesale destruction, it has an insurmountable
6 credibility problem. This entire project needs a
7 harder look. Thank you.

8 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
9 your testimony. Our next four speakers on this list
10 may not be present, but I will call the names one
11 more time:

12 Diana Stewart;
13 Jodie Ann Beatty;
14 Shan Jayakumar;
15 Amy Cosmar.

16 If anyone is present to speak for
17 these registered speakers, please unmute yourself or
18 message me through the Zoom chat.

19 (No response.)

20 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. We'll
21 move to the next set of speakers then. The next set
22 of five speakers on our list is:

23 Max Wycisk;
24 Charlie Samboy;
25 Vicki Stadlen,

1 John Graham;

2 Jeremy Woodoff.

3 Max Wycisk spoke earlier, so we
4 will move to Charlie Samboy. You may unmute yourself
5 and begin when you're ready.

6 MR. SAMBOY: Good evening. My name
7 is Charlie Samboy. I'm the Director of government
8 affairs with the New York Building Congress. The
9 New York Building Congress strongly supports the
10 reconstruction of Penn Station and the
11 revitalization plan for the existing community.

12 New York will never reach its
13 fullest potential until we have a 21st century
14 transportation hub all across the City that provides
15 residents, workers and commuters with a world class
16 experience. While some of the region's hubs have
17 either been rebuilt or have ongoing preservations,
18 Penn Station remained a terrible experience for all
19 who interact with it.

20 Additionally, it's in the best
21 interest of all New Yorkers that we improve our
22 transportation infrastructure and public realm
23 experiences. In the case of the Penn Station area,
24 the economic growth and vitality of the neighborhood
25 and the lives on both events [Zoom inaudible]

1 simultaneously.

2 It was a daily volume of traffic
3 that exceeds all the areas and airports combined.
4 Penn Station is the main area for all office
5 workers, commuters and the general public in
6 Manhattan. Additionally, the area is home to
7 residents who rely on many of the same amenities as
8 those who live in the [Zoom inaudible] of the
9 vicinity. They too need social services, additional
10 affordable housing opportunities, new
11 community-oriented retail, open space and more.

12 All this can be achieved with the
13 revised GPP presented today by Governor Hochul and
14 the team at the Empire State Development. We
15 applaud them for the leadership and making a
16 concerned effort to listen to New York City's
17 elected officials, transportation experts and all
18 those in the Community Advisory Committee.

19 The building founders understand
20 the tremendous need for investing in infrastructure
21 in this decade. Building is one of the best ways to
22 get out of an economic crisis, accelerate a recovery
23 and employ thousands of workers.

24 At an estimated cost of nearly
25 \$7 billion, the Penn Station area plan has the

1 potential to employ nearly 50,000 building
2 professionals over the next several years. Jobs
3 that are critical to elevating families and those
4 affected by the economic crisis.

5 Our post-Covid recovery hinges on
6 our ability to come together and progress
7 transformational projects like the reconstruction of
8 Penn Station and revitalization of the surrounding
9 neighborhood that will have a lasting effect for
10 generations of New Yorkers.

11 In closing, the GPP here today
12 will create a world class transportation hub and a
13 revitalized neighborhood that is critical to New
14 York's future as an essential business of arts and
15 culture.

16 We ask that the ESD board invest
17 in the City's economic success for the benefit of
18 New Yorkers today and generations to come by
19 approving this GPP. Thank you.

20 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
21 your testimony. our next speaker -- our next
22 registered speaker is Vicki Stadlen. Vicki Stadlen,
23 if you are present in the hearing, please unmute
24 yourself or let me know.

25 (No response.)

1 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. We'll
2 move to our next registered speaker, John Graham.
3 John Graham, please unmute yourself and let us know
4 when you're ready to begin.

5 MR. GRAHAM: Good evening. My name
6 is John Graham. I'm a board member of the Victorian
7 Society in New York as well as a former chairperson
8 of the New York City Landmarks Preservation
9 Commission and an architect. The Victorian Society
10 is vehemently opposed to the scheme to demo several
11 blocks in midtown around Penn Station, which
12 contains up to 50 viable historic buildings, now
13 housing hundreds of businesses with 9,000 jobs and
14 at least 200 residents.

15 It's time to learn from our
16 mistakes and end the Moses-era tactic of declaring a
17 functioning community blighted due to owner
18 building -- due to building owners' neglect -- in
19 this case Vornado Realty -- and using eminent domain
20 to bypass the public process, destroying historic
21 buildings and vibrant communities. As Senator Liz
22 Krueger reasonably asked, "when did Andrew Cuomo
23 become Robert Moses?"

24 In addition to millions of square
25 feet of unneeded commercial office space, at a time

1 when working from home is the new normal, the
2 proposal also includes two hotels that does not
3 consider the relatively easy, sustainable and
4 economical renovation of the two vast historic
5 hotels it plans to demolish: The Hotel
6 Pennsylvania, one of the largest in the world having
7 opened in 1919; or the Hotel Stewart.

8 The Hotel Pennsylvania's a
9 monumental structure designed by McKim, Mead and
10 White as an integral part of the original
11 Pennsylvania Station complex. The hotel's former
12 functions were symbiotic with the magnificent
13 station. The construction and materials for both
14 buildings were designed and built for the ages with
15 massive columns and with facades planning granite,
16 marble and grip all of which should not be added to
17 the land bill that was the original Penn Station.

18 In this context, it's interesting
19 to note that the 2021 Pritzker Prize, the highest
20 international architectural award, was just given to
21 two architects who adaptively reuse buildings.

22 "There are too many demolitions of existing
23 buildings, which are not old, which still have a
24 life in front of them, which are not out of use,"
25 said architect Anne Lacaton.

1 "We think that is too big a waste
2 of materials. If we observe carefully, if we look
3 at things with fresh eyes, there is always something
4 positive to take from an existing situation."

5 I have no patience for those who
6 say that the Hotel Pennsylvania is dingy. This
7 so-called blighted condition was created by the
8 owners of Vornado Realty in much the same way that
9 the original Penn Station was not maintained and
10 suffered horrendous interventions by the building's
11 owners to the point where the public could not
12 appreciate and did forget it's magnificent until it
13 was gone.

14 New York City must learn from its
15 mistakes and stop destroying historic viable
16 buildings housing hundreds of businesses and
17 residents only to construct unwanted and unneeded
18 towers that only benefit developers or result in
19 vacant lots when ill-conceived plans fall through.
20 And for what? 20 million feet of empty office space
21 given by Andrew Cuomo to Vornado in exchange for
22 \$400,000 in donations and building his legacy
23 project, Moynihan Station.

24 This city will not recover from
25 the Covid pandemic or the next crisis by destroying

1 itself. Thank you very much. Good evening.

2 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
3 your testimony. Our next registered speaker is
4 Jeremy Woodoff. You may begin when you're ready.

5 MR. WOODOFF: Good evening. Thank
6 you very much. My name is Jeremy Woodoff. I'm also
7 a board member of the Victorian Society of New York
8 and I'm speaking in support of its position and also
9 for myself as a long-time city planner and historic
10 preservation of New York City.

11 It's remarkable to me that a city
12 and state that refers to themselves as progressive
13 and cutting edge espoused a form of urban renewal
14 and redevelopment that was discredited 50 years ago.
15 The proposal to clear all buildings regardless of
16 their architectural merit and potential for reuse,
17 it is ugly and an unsustainable approach as the
18 clear cutting of tropical rain forests in a
19 different context.

20 The Draft Environmental Impact
21 Statement found that there would be a number of
22 significant adverse impacts on historic resources.
23 The next step is supposed to be preparing
24 alternatives that would eliminate or minimize those
25 impacts, but today all that the DEIS seems to do is

1 indicate no, we don't want to do that. And there's
2 been no meaningful proposal of alternatives that
3 would enable to project to meet its objectives while
4 still preserving some or all of the significant
5 historic buildings in the area.

6 I hope that that -- any architects
7 or planners who are familiar with adaptive reuse and
8 actual modern ways or redeveloping cities without
9 this kind of 1960-style urban renewal could come up
10 with reasonable plans that could then be considered
11 by those who have to make the decisions on how to
12 proceed. Thank you very much.

13 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
14 your testimony. Our next speaker -- our next list
15 of five speakers includes:

16 Joseph Clift;

17 Randall Batterman;

18 Joseph Urso;

19 Michael Piccirillo;

20 And Marrissa Williams.

21 The first one on that list will be
22 Joseph Clift.

23 MR. CLIFT: Yes. Can you hear me?

24 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes. Thank
25 you. You may begin.

1 MR. CLIFT: Okay. Good evening. I
2 have to admire the staff of the person running the
3 meeting, but I got to say the support is terrible.
4 Why do you have 10-minute gaps? All you have to do
5 is have two of everybody. Our time is valuable.

6 The second thing, you got to come
7 up with a way to not call on people that aren't
8 there. You've destroyed at least a third of the
9 time. And I think if I didn't know better, I would
10 think ESD was trying to keep people from testifying.

11 And what I want to talk about
12 tonight -- I'm a past director of planning at the
13 Long Island Railroad. I'm also an alumnus of
14 Community Board 5 and I have to say they've done a
15 magnificent job persuing this project. I'm
16 surprised it's not dead by now, but it appears to
17 still be alive.

18 But the project is based on false
19 premise. The premise is that Penn South is not only
20 necessary, but will create a world class hub for
21 transit. Nothing could be further from the truth.
22 You're building a facility that will put everyone a
23 block further from the subways that most will need
24 and for those that can walk a block further from
25 most of their destinations.

1 It's a horrible idea. No one in
2 the world is now building stay-in tunnels, which is
3 what would be built here. Everyone is connecting
4 terminals.

5 The solution in the new term is to
6 improve Penn Station itself. You can do that with a
7 lot of basic improvements and eventually connect
8 Grand Central to Penn Station with a two-track
9 connection. Community Board 5 I think supported
10 this option back in 2008. That is the solution.

11 If you do not have a Penn South,
12 then all the development south of 31st Street
13 disappears because it's based on a thesis that they
14 will require that property for eminent domain. No
15 need for transit, no eminent domain, everything
16 crashes.

17 And let me just add this. Amtrak
18 would be thrilled with Penn South because then they
19 get to throw New Jersey Transit out of Penn Station.
20 These railroads do not work well together. They
21 don't want to play in the same sandbox. They don't
22 have any money. It's important that the City
23 recognize the situation here.

24 And lastly, gateway phase one,
25 which is under effort now, is going to cost

1 \$14 billion. It's the tunnel and the new bridge to
2 Hackensack. It adds no additional capacity. It
3 says so right in the financial plan and the EIS for
4 the tunnels.

5 To get that extra capacity, you
6 have to spend \$20 billion extra dollars. Once
7 again, \$20 billion extra dollars. And it's not just
8 7 billion for Penn South. It's a lot of other
9 pieces. So what you have here is a \$34 billion
10 project I doubt will ever happen and it's time for
11 the City and the State to wake up to that fact.
12 Thanks so much and have a good evening.

13 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
14 your testimony and for your patience. Our next
15 three speakers may not -- may no longer be in the
16 hearing, but I want to call their names to make
17 sure.

18 Randall Batterman;

19 Joseph Urso;

20 And Marrison Williams.

21 If you're present in the hearing
22 or a representative, please unmute yourself or send
23 a message in the chat.

24 (No response.)

25 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. Then

1 we'll move on to our next and actually final list of
2 speakers -- Oh, excuse me. I may have missed
3 Michael Piccirillo. Do we have Michael Piccirillo?

4 (No response.)

5 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. Thank
6 you very much. If you -- please do message me if
7 needed, so our final list of speakers includes:

8 Matt Tighe;

9 Stuart Leigh,

10 Robert O'Brien.

11 And George Calderaro.

12 So we will begin with Matt Tighe.

13 MR. TIGHE: I will not be
14 testifying.

15 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you
16 very much. We'll move onto Stuart Leigh. Stuart
17 Leigh, if you're present, please feel free to unmute
18 yourself and provide testimony.

19 (No response.)

20 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. Then
21 we'll move onto Robert O'Brien. Robert O'Brien, you
22 can unmute yourself and speak when you're ready.

23 MR. O'BRIEN: Hello. Thank you so
24 much. My name is Robert O'Brien and thank you for
25 the chance to speak tonight especially for the

1 patience of all hosts. We're almost done. And
2 thank you to all the previous speakers and their
3 wonderful ideas that have come forward tonight.

4 As a user of the Pennsylvania
5 Station transit hub and a public transportation,
6 both urban and interregional throughout the world,
7 even this, I must say, revised plan frankly advisory
8 of Penn Station seems to be pretty universally
9 reviled and I must submit that I agree with that
10 assessment of the transportation experience. That
11 has certainly been my personal one.

12 Ostensibly this project is about
13 transportation, so moving people from point A to
14 point B, but realistically this project very seems
15 to be about everything except for transportation.
16 So transit needs to be where this project begins and
17 for this point it seems to be congruent of the
18 second consideration.

19 So I do have a question. What is
20 then the legacy of this project for the so-called
21 greatest city in the world? How would New York then
22 compare to other cities like London or Mulan and
23 will it accomplish its "goal of transportation?" It
24 really doesn't seem so especially given so much
25 opposition this evening. And if it doesn't, is it

1 even worth spending money on it?

2 So one final comment is there's
3 been a couple of people who mentioned the adage
4 "don't let the best be the enemy of the good" and,
5 you know, I'll say fair enough. I do agree with
6 that in many circumstances, but to be honest I think
7 the question is how good is this plan actually
8 especially given that there is so much dissent.

9 And with -- when we look at the
10 plan, such dramatic change. Is, you know, is the
11 good good enough, you know? What is that impact
12 going to be in 100 years? Will it be more
13 mediocracy?

14 Frankly with the plan and
15 supporters promising miracles, we need to ask the
16 question is this miracle really going to come to
17 pass? And I'm just very doubtful and I think we
18 need to think more expansively and we do need a
19 better plan. Thank you for letting me speak.

20 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for
21 your testimony. Our next speaker will be George
22 Calderaro. George, you may unmute yourself and turn
23 on your camera if you'd like and provide your
24 testimony.

25 (No response.)

1 THE HEARING OFFICER: George
2 Calderaro may have decided not to speak. A final
3 call for George Calderaro.

4 (No response.)

5 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. And
6 with that, we have completed all of our registered
7 speakers. Everyone has been given the opportunity
8 to provide testimony who registered or requested to
9 speak and was present in the hearing. And so as
10 there are no other speakers waiting to speak, we
11 will close this public hearing at this time.

12 Thank you again for joining us
13 this evening and for being a part of this very long
14 and informative hearing for the Penn Station area
15 redevelopment project GPP and DEIS public hearing.

16 Please note that you may submit
17 any comments that you have. Whether you've spoken
18 in testimony today or you have additional comments,
19 you may submit all comments on the GPP, the draft
20 DEIS and proposed revisions via the address list
21 that will now come up on your screen.

22 You may submit them via email to
23 pennstationarea@esd.ny.gov or the former address
24 empirestation@esd.ny.gov or you may email -- excuse
25 me. You may mail comments via the US Postal Service

1 to Stacey Tehran at Empire State Development, 633
2 Third Avenue, 37th floor, New York, New York 10017.

3 Comments on the GPP, draft EIS and
4 proposed revisions to the plan will be accepted
5 until 5 o'clock p.m. on January 10th, 2022.

6 Thank you all so much and have a
7 good night.

8 (At 11:02 p.m., the proceedings
9 were concluded)

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STATE OF NEW YORK)
SS.
COUNTY OF NEW YORK)

I, ALEXIARA PIERCE, a Shorthand
(Stenotype) Reporter, do hereby certify that the
foregoing pages 1 through 248, taken via Zoom, is a
true and correct transcription of my shorthand notes.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto
set my name this 18th of December, 2021.



ALEXIARA PIERCE