

Committees on Transportation and Public Safety
May 2nd, 2017
Opening Statement: Chair Ydanis Rodriguez

Good afternoon and welcome to today's joint hearing of the NYC Council Transportation and Public Safety Committees. I want to thank my co-chair today, Council Member Vanessa Gibson, for agreeing to hold this important hearing. We are joined today by Council Members...

Today we will discuss two pieces of legislation that aim to leverage the eyes and ears of New Yorkers as we pursue hit and run drivers who kill and seriously injure others on our streets. This despicable crime happens far too frequently. In the first week and a half of this year, we saw 4 New Yorkers lose their lives to hit and run crashes. In FY16, there were 44,865 hit and runs, with 38 taking the life of a victim. The stories of these victims evoke tears. For some, they are a son who was attending college on the way to fulfilling their dream, for others they radio DJ beloved by hundreds of thousands, or a daughter on her way home after a successful job interview. Over the past several years, I have heard far too many of these stories and I have made it a point to do everything I can to eradicate fatal hit and run crashes on our streets.

But if we are to prevent hit and run crashes, we must make a point of catching those that commit this cowardly crime. We must make a point to follow through—to capture and convict those that leave bleeding bodies in their wake as they look to avoid the consequences. It means increasing the rate of arrest and conviction of drivers who kill, which in FY16 was just over 33%. To accomplish this, I introduced two pieces of legislation we will hear today that aims to leverage the eyes and ears of New Yorkers in the effort to catch hit and run drivers.

Intro 1463 would create an Amber Alert-like system, where the NYPD could rapidly disseminate information on make and models of cars involved in serious crashes, or any helpful information that could lead to an arrest.

Intro 1418 would work similar to the "1-800-copshot" tipline, where New Yorkers can report crimes or information on crimes and receive rewards if their information leads to an arrest and conviction. This hit and run reward fund would create incentives for New Yorkers to actively support hit and run investigations and hopefully increase rates of arrests and convictions for these awful crimes.

This legislation follows several different jurisdictions that have passed alert and reward systems. In Colorado, success of such programs on a local level led to the state to pass an alert system, now known as the Medina Alert, named for a 21-year old victim killed in a hit and run. The City of Los Angeles also established alert and reward systems to catch hit and run drivers, with rewards reaching up to \$50,000 for information leading to the arrest of a driver who has killed and left the scene. Their efforts were followed by the full state of California beginning a "yellow alert" system for hit and run drivers and I am glad to say legislation has been introduced on the state level here in New York as well by Assembly Member Carmen De La Rosa and Senator Marisol Alcantara.

Here in New York City, we can always do more to curb crashes. I am glad that DOT has been such a partner in this effort, working to redesign streets so that drivers have less space to drive recklessly. Yet the fact remains that people continue to lose their lives on our streets. And when those that kill them flee, we face a grave dilemma.

It is my hope that members of the administration here to testify today can provide insight into the current strategies undertaken when investigating one of our many hit and run crashes. What has proven successful and where are we lacking when it comes to making arrests. We would also like to hear how the tools provided in this legislation can be leveraged to improve our arrest rates and let drivers know that if they hit someone on our streets, regardless of the severity, they need to get out of their car to help or face the consequences for driving away.

Before we begin, I would like to thank our committee staff for helping to put this hearing together. Counsel Faiza Malik and policy analysts Jonathan Masserano, Gafar Zaaloff and Emily Rooney, as well as my staff, Chief of Staff Jose Louis and Deputy Chief of Staffs Russell Murphy and Stephanie Miliano. Now, we will hear from my co-chair Council Member Gibson...

Thank you Council Member Gibson. I now welcome testimony from members of the administration here today and ask them to please raise their hands as our staff delivers the affirmation...