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THE COUNCIL OF
THE CITY OF NEW YORK
JUSTIN BRANNAN
COUNCIL MEMBER
43RD DISTRICT, BROOKLYN

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YOUTH SERVICES

March 29, 2021

Patrick J. Foye
Chairman and CEO, Metropolitan Transportation Authority
MTA Headquarters
2 Broadway
New York, NY 10004

Daniel DeCrescenzo
President, MTA Bridges and Tunnels
Randall's Island
New York, NY 10035

Deanne Criswell
Commissioner, NYC Emergency Management
165 Cadman Plaza East
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Dear Mr. Foye, Mr. DeCrescenzo, and Ms. Criswell,

I hope this letter finds you all well. I am writing regarding this past Friday's Verrazzano-Narrows Bridge upper level closure. I am sure you are aware the bridge's upper levels were closed due to high winds for several hours that evening. Unfortunately, the closure had a ripple effect that turned residential and commercial streets in Bay Ridge and Dyker Heights into parking lots. We had dangerous gridlock traffic throughout the neighborhoods I represent that lasted until the wind died down and the bridge's upper levels were reopened.

We appreciate that high winds force bridge closures a few times a year. Safety is nonnegotiable, and I have no interest in calling to keep the upper levels open even when it may be dangerous to do so. However, shutting down the Verrazzano without a contingency plan in place for our neighborhood is unacceptable. The resulting traffic conditions are dangerous for all users of the roads, and can easily block NYPD, FDNY, and EMS first responders from getting where they need to go.

What are the metrics that determine level closures? What is the contingency plan for when they go into effect? Based on what we saw play out last week (and often enough

before that), I suspect there isn't one. It is insane that we are not prepared with, at minimum, some kind of traffic control plan to keep our streets safe on these occasions.

The same spirit of safety that drives Verrazzano Bridge closures demands a contingency plan for our neighborhood. The MTA's system as it stands closes the upper levels for safety, but then creates a dangerous situation in the neighborhood with no one there to manage it. We need a response that is triggered automatically by any partial or full shutdown of the Verrazzano Bridge. If there is no contingency plan now, then we need to make one as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "J Brannan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter "J" being large and stylized.

*Councilman Justin Brannan, 43rd District
Bay Ridge, Dyker Heights, Bath Beach, and Bensonhurst*