

**STATEMENT OF THE BROADWAY LEAGUE IN SUPPORT OF DOT RULES
RELATING TO THE THEATRE DISTRICT ZONE**

November 29, 2021

The Broadway League is the principal trade association for the commercial theatre industry and represents over 600 venue owners, producers, and road presenters nationwide – the majority of which maintain offices in New York City. We thank the City Council and Mayor Bill de Blasio for enacting the legislation informing today’s proceedings, as well as the Department of Transportation (“DOT”) for expediently drafting the proposed Rules under consideration.

In 2019, Broadway sold 14.8 million tickets for New York City productions. Approximately 46% of those admissions were domestic tourists and an additional 19% were foreign tourists, the largest number of foreign visitors in Broadway history. Broadway provided almost 100,000 full-time equivalent jobs and welcomed approximately 40,000 theatregoers per day, with approximately 80,000 visiting on days which have two performances, Wednesdays and Saturdays. Combined, Broadway had an economic impact of approximately \$14.7 billion on the City and generated approximately \$675 million in local tax revenue. However, all Broadway venues have been shuttered since March 12, 2020, costing New York an estimated \$1.225 billion each month in lost economic activity.

Now, after the longest shutdown in its history, Broadway’s curtains are lifting. We are beginning to welcome theatregoers and have implemented comprehensive COVID safety protocols for our audiences and employees. However, we have a long road ahead and will need the City’s help to bring our audiences back to pre-COVID levels. Of paramount importance is safety and security as visitors traverse the Theatre District.

We support the DOT’s proposed rules as they will help regulate what remains a leading contributor to an unsafe and disorganized atmosphere in Times Square. We have seen a proliferation of anonymous vendors who aggressively solicit families, take advantage of their familiarity with popular characters, and often attempt to embarrass or harass visitors into paying for photographs. In 2016, the City enacted legislation aimed at quelling this activity and created flow zones and designated activity zones.

Unfortunately, many unlicensed vendors have taken advantage of a loophole in the current law and solicit business outside the designated activity zones. This has largely prevented the City from effectively discouraging this type of behavior, which damages the perception of New York City, and hurts tourism and local businesses.

The Rules under consideration address this outstanding problem. That coupled with the designation of Broadway and 42nd Street with flow zones and other clarifications, will allow police to better ensure pedestrian safety. Adopting these Rules will help provide the best possible experience for visitors and area workers now returning to Times Square and remind the world that our lawmakers take public safety seriously.

The League has always endorsed legislation aimed at improving the flow of traffic and enhancing the overall quality of life in Times Square. Therefore, we would like to briefly highlight two related concerns for the City Council and Administration to examine. Access to Midtown remains vital for local businesses. However, the continual addition of pedestrian plazas and bicycle lanes lead to clogged streets and needlessly complicated vehicular access to many of our theatres. The millions of Broadway attendees who travel into the City by car should be welcomed, not exasperated by a lack of pick-up and drop off access.

Many vehicular traffic and parking lanes have already been eliminated to accommodate large pedestrian areas and bicyclists, and more work is in the pipeline. Also, the closing of Broadway from 49th to 47th is misleading, complicated and creates confusion that greatly exacerbates congestion. We are already experiencing near gridlock, non-stop honking of horns and inconvenience for drivers in midtown. While we acknowledge the need larger sidewalks and bicycles lanes, we do not recommend further closing Broadway from 50th to 47th to create new plazas as local businesses must be given an opportunity to meaningfully participate in decisions that will directly impact their customers.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony.