

**Department of Motor Vehicles  
Fiscal Year 2025-26 Budget Hearing  
Testimony of Mark J.F. Schroeder, Commissioner**

**February 6, 2025**

Good afternoon. I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about the great work happening at the DMV.

Since I became Commissioner six years ago, we changed our vision statement to “shatter the perceptions of the DMV,” and thanks to our more than 3,000 dedicated civil servants, we are passionately doing that every day.

I’m confident that you and your legislative colleagues are well aware of the great things happening at DMV thanks to our Legislative Constituent Affairs team. This team not only handles your questions, but they also play offense by visiting all Legislative offices to spread the word of what DMV is doing.

Providing an exceptional experience for our customers is the driving force behind the agency’s ongoing technology modernization plan. When I sat before you last year, I was looking forward to beginning that effort, and now I am happy to say we are well underway.

Governor Hochul’s Executive Budget provides \$495 Million to

continue the implementation of this critical improvement project and to support day-to-day operations at both state- and county- run offices. The return on this investment will be felt immediately through improved customer service and DMV not being reliant on outdated, unstable technology. DMV generates over \$2B per year so when systems and offices go down, the impact quickly adds up.

Our modernization plan will replace the majority of our more than 50-year-old systems during two phases over the next four years. It is the cornerstone of a broader initiative that we began nearly five years ago to re-imagine the DMV.

By embracing a new way of thinking and leveraging innovative technology, we launched a redesigned website, added new online transactions, made it easier to access DMV records, and introduced online pre-screening for some of the most complicated transactions like getting a REAL ID.

As millions of New Yorkers prepare for the full implementation of the REAL ID Act in May, we know that our online customer support tools are invaluable. We also know that not everyone has the luxury of going online, so DMV hit the road this past year by participating in community events and reaching into neighborhoods to better meet underserved New Yorkers

where they are.

Our creative approach to customer service also led to record-setting improvements in our contact center. We launched a self-service tool that provides important license status information, made it easier to navigate through our phone tree, and we continued to improve live chat and email interactions to ensure customers receive fast, consistent guidance regardless of how they interact with our agency.

Our forward-looking staff also led New York to become one of the first states in the nation to launch a mobile ID, and they continue to help shape the evolving digital credential ecosystem. Secure mobile IDs will become increasingly important in the future as businesses, governments and consumers continue to combat fraud and identity theft.

Through the leadership of our Governor, DMV staff have also been active in the State's fight against ghost plates and toll evasion. Last year, DMV participated in more than five-dozen security details through the Ghost Plate Task Force that led to more than 700 arrests, and 3,400 illegal vehicles seized.

Our investigators and automotive field inspectors also recovered hundreds of stolen vehicles and vehicle parts last year worth more than \$8 million. They recovered vehicle titles valued at nearly \$2 million, and helped

New Yorkers access nearly \$1.5 million in restitution and repairs from dishonest auto dealers and repair shops.

Keeping everyone safe on our roads is central to the mission of both DMV and the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee, which I Chair. Around this time last year, we proposed a series of regulatory amendments to make it easier to remove persistently dangerous drivers from our roadways. I am happy to say that we have adopted those regulations and the first of them became enforceable in January.

The Governor also continues to aggressively lead efforts to address drugged driving by proposing important updates to Vehicle and Traffic Law to close loopholes and better hold motorists accountable for driving while impaired by drugs. I believe we must keep up with the bad actors who find new ways to put the lives of innocent New Yorkers at risk and I'm confident this proposal will do just that.

Additionally, GTSC continues to focus public awareness and outreach efforts in communities that are overrepresented by traffic crashes and fatalities, like in Rochester where speeding is the number one cause of fatal crashes. Last year we partnered with the Rochester Redwings baseball team to help reach new audiences. This year, we will again give special attention to speeding, impaired driving, distracted driving, and micro-

mobility.

As we focus on diversifying our traffic safety messaging, we also strive to ensure that our workforce is as diverse as the more than 15 million customers we serve. The attention we give to creating an inviting and diverse work environment also extends to the contracts we procure. I am particularly proud to say that more than 79 percent of our current fiscal year spending is done through MWBEs, and more than 33 percent is done through Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Business.

We know the need for truck and bus drivers is still very real, so we continue to offer a federal waiver for part of the commercial driver license road test to make it easier to get perspective bus drivers licensed and ready to meet the need of our schools statewide.

There also remains a critical need for organ, eye, and tissue donors. New York has one of the lowest donor registry enrollment rates in the country, however, we reached a critical milestone last year. For the first time in New York's history, more than 50 percent of eligible New Yorkers joined the organ donor registry, and we hope to continue that momentum in 2025.

Speaking of key partnerships, I'd be remiss to not mention our critical partnership with the County Clerks who run DMV operations in 51 counties

statewide. We rely on our close collaboration with the Clerks to provide effective and efficient services to all New Yorkers.

I am confident that if you visit a DMV today, you will be as pleased as so many of our customers who write to us each day with compliments like these:

- “I have never had such outstanding customer service from anyone as I did today. Thank you!”
- “Lost my license; the online renewal form and temporary license made it easy and painless.”
- “Ever since the end of covid, the DMV did a complete 180. What a difference from years past. Everyone should be commended.”

I could go on, but the point is, these are real people seeing real results from the improvements we are making, and we look forward to making things even better in the years to come.

Once again, thank you for this opportunity to speak with you today. I welcome any questions you might have at this time.