

THE SIXTH BOROUGH DISPATCH

PHILADELPHIAN IN NEW YORK CITY

APRIL 2026

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400 Miles of Permanent Scaffolding

If you find yourself walking through New York City, you will notice that the scenery is filled with scaffolding. This scaffolding is often erected along the exterior wall of a building. You may think that it is there temporarily for construction, but much of this scaffolding ends up becoming relatively permanent—sometimes years and even decades pass with no sign of the scaffolding being removed. This has become a persistent problem for many previous mayors, who have attempted to address this issue but with limited success.

The origin of this issue goes back to 1979, when a brick fell from a building and killed a young student. From this event, New York City passed legislation requiring buildings to be inspected for related dangers every 5 years. If a potential danger is found, the building owner is required to install scaffolding to protect pedestrians from falling objects until the danger is mitigated.

What has really happened is that building owners opt to install the scaffolding when they fail an inspection and forego necessary repairs/construction. Hence, the existence of permanent scaffolding. In New York City, there are around 650 kilometers of scaffolding, equivalent to 400 miles.

[Mayor Mamdani has implemented policies to address this issue.](#) So far, he has stated that owners who keep the scaffolding up for over 180 days will be fined. Currently, this policy is scheduled to be established in mid-April and implemented in the summer. Additionally, Mamdani plans to modify the current inspection schedule from every 5 years to every 6 years for older buildings and every 12 years for newer buildings.

They Finally Built the Bridge: March Transportation News

In March, transportation saw impressive announcements.

[Firstly, the Portal Bridge construction has been completed!](#) This is a project that has been in planning and implementation for decades. The original Portal Bridge was built 115 years ago. Due to the aging infrastructure, it has been the origin of many delays in the Northeastern Corridor (NEC). It has been said that the updated bridge is essential to improving train reliability.

In other news, the Metro Transportation Authority (MTA) has [filed another lawsuit](#) against the Trump Administration. They claim that the federal government is withholding \$18 billion in subsidies that were previously promised for the Gateway Tunnel (a tunnel under the Hudson River connecting Manhattan and New Jersey, which is crucial for hundreds of thousands of commuters every day) and the construction of a new station on the 2 subway line.

In response, the Department of Transportation (USDOT) has stated that one of its primary goals is to ensure that tax dollars are being spent responsibly. Previously, they claimed that the funding was paused due to the government shutdown in 2025 and related to New York's protection of DEI programs, which USDOT states opposes the Trump Administration's policy guidelines.

For the paused Gateway Tunnel funding, in February, a judge ruled that the funding must be restored. They stated that the paused funding would cause massive harm to the local economy and hurt the public interest. New York and New Jersey additionally claimed that the paused funding was a breach of contract. While this funding has been restored, the funding related to the subway expansion remains in court.

Lastly, in New Jersey, Governor Mikkie Sherril [signed a Gubernatorial Executive Order](#) with the purpose of improving NJTransit. This executive order included hosting three meetings where passengers could express their thoughts and opinions on current NJTransit services and what they would like to see.

Currently, NJTransit has expressed its main goals. These include: station cleanliness, accessibility, safety, and accurate time tracking on digital platforms. These goals are consistent with passenger feedback.

What Caused the LaGuardia Crash?

Currently, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is investigating the crash. There are [a few points](#) of concern they have mentioned so far.

1. Apparently, the ATC had stepped away from the radar before the incident. This is because an additional incident with a United aircraft required the use of an emergency phone call. However, the emergency phone is often placed on the manager's desk. So, the ATC needed to leave the radar and move to the emergency phone. This process could have interrupted the critical focus necessary to manage multiple aircraft.
2. There were also various issues relating to the firetruck. For example, there is a possibility that the communication devices in the firetruck never relayed the ATC's command for the truck to stop. Additionally, the NTSB wants to know if the firetruck could have seen the aircraft landing from its position on the runway. Lastly, there is a chance the firetruck did not stop at a mandatory stop line.
3. Relating to the ATC, there is a well-known issue that there are not enough ATCs in the US for air travel. During the crash, only 2 ATCs were staffed. This is the FAA's limit. Additionally, the ATC involved in the crash was simultaneously managing six other aircraft in addition to the Air Canada flight, and he was also managing another runway.

Budget

Leaders are discussing methods for funding the budget deficit:

Income Tax Increases

Democrats of the New York State legislature are considering raising [income taxes](#) for wealthy individuals and corporations. Governor Hochul opposes these taxes and has repeatedly negotiated with the legislature to prevent the implementation of the tax.

These taxes would not only apply to New York City; they also apply to the state. One of NYC's Mayor Mamdani's proposed policies is to increase the income tax. This is for the purpose of paying for his policies and the NYC budget. However, he does not have the authority to increase these taxes, which the state legislature must change. Mamdani has stated that without an income tax increase, there is no way for NYC to maintain a balanced budget.

In New York State, 54% of residents support the income tax increase for individuals and businesses making more than \$1 million per year.

Parking Fees

The New York City Council is considering implementing [parking fees](#) for the 3 million free parking spaces in the city. The goal is to help reduce the large budget deficit and keep spaces open for NYC residents.

Mayor Mamdani is opposed to this policy. He believes that adding parking fees will not largely impact the budget deficit, and that structural change is needed more than parking fees.

Mamdani's Interests

Mamdani has [three main ideas](#) currently for paying for this budget, particularly considering the inability to increase income taxes. These include tax revenue from Wall Street, the use of contingency funds, and increased property taxes.

However, fiscal watchdogs have shown skepticism for these revenue sources. They warn that even though Wall Street performs strongly now, that doesn't mean it will continue to perform strongly in the future. Therefore, it is risky to rely on tax revenues. For contingency funds, they mention that these funds should only be used for disasters, not to compensate for an imbalanced budget. Lastly, regarding property taxes, they state that this would likely lead to increased rent prices, and historically, it does not actually tax wealthy homeowners.

Policy Tracking

Childcare

Background

According to Mamdani's policy publications, the highest cost that New Yorkers experience after rent is childcare. This problem has become so large that it is forcing people to move away from the city.

Additionally, because many families in NYC lack access to affordable childcare, this leads to job interruptions, being let go, or not being able to accept promotions due to the additional responsibility of caring for the child in lieu of childcare.

In comparison to the rest of the country, New York City has a high maternal mortality rate. Most of these deaths are considered preventable.

Campaign Promises

Mamdani has pledged to implement free childcare for every child in New York aged 6 weeks to 5 years, increase wages for childcare workers, and provide new parents with a collection of essentials and information.

Previous Policy Changes

In February, Mamdani held discussions with current childcare service providers to gather information valuable for implementing his policies. He also began to invite new childcare providers to expand childcare services in NYC.

March Policy Changes

Home Visits for Expecting Mothers

Mayor Mamdani and Governor Hochul are planning to expand the [Nurse Home visit](#) program by funding an additional \$20 million.

This program will pair nurses with expecting mothers on Medicaid and WIC (Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children). The nurses will advise expecting mothers on essential topics, including nutrition, breastfeeding, vaccination, disease prevention, and general childcare skills.

This program looks to increase the number of participating families to 3,000.

Free 2-K and 3-K Programs

For this reason, Mayor Mamdani and Governor Hochul have announced that they will provide [2,000 free 2-K childcare seats](#) in four NYC boroughs starting in the fall. Additionally, 1,000 seats for 3-K childcare will be provided.

Additionally, they plan to increase the openings to 12,000 by 2027 and continue to expand the program for the next 4 years.

Governor Hochul announced that she is establishing \$12 billion to support affordable childcare.



Down the Pothole!

Find additional information below in Column 1

Bikes and Buses

Background

According to Mamdani's policy publications, New Yorkers rely heavily on the public bus services. However, they are struggling to afford the increasing fare. Additionally, the NYC buses are the slowest in the nation.

The New York City Council rated the initiatives to expand bike and bus lanes in NYC as an "F." The previous mayor, Mr. Adams, had stated that he would increase the efficiency of buses, but in reality, hardly any changes took place.

Campaign Promises

Mamdani has pledged to make all city buses free and also make buses faster by adding additional bus priority lanes, adding bus queue jump signals, and adding loading zones to keep double parkers out of the way.

Previous Policy Changes

In February, Mamdani resumed a bus lane expansion project that had been halted during the Adams administration.

March Policy Changes

Bike Lane Planning

Mayor Mamdani has stated that there is a plan to establish [bike and bus lanes](#) on McGuinness Boulevard, Madison Avenue, and Fordham Road. Based on the NYC Street Plan for 2026, the Department of Transportation is required to comply with the road plan, including new distance requirements for bicycles and bus lanes for 5 years.



Down the Pothole! Insight below.

Find additional information below in Column 2

Bad Landlords

Background

Half a million residents live in poor housing conditions due to landlord neglect.

Campaign Promises

Mamdani has pledged to combine related agencies under one roof to improve coordination between agencies to ensure landlords are being responsible, revamp the 311 experience to allow tenants to schedule and track inspections, have the city do repairs in the case that a landlord does not and send them the bill, and lastly, he has pledged to have the city take ownership of the neglected properties.

Previous Policy Changes

In February, Mamdani held the city's first "Rental Fraud Hearing," providing a forum where tenants can voice their criticisms regarding unsafe building conditions and hidden fees. Following the meeting, the city is required to announce a plan to protect tenants within 90 days.

Additionally, a list of 250 buildings with frequent code violations has been released. Buildings on this list will be subject to stricter oversight; if landlords fail to carry out necessary repairs, the city will step in to perform the work on their behalf.

March Policy Changes

The NYC Public Advocate has released his list of "The Top 100 Worst Landlords." Based on this list, the Housing Preservation and Development Department (HPD) has [sued one of the landlords](#) on the list, and the court has ordered the landlord to pay 210 million dollars in penalties.



Down the Pothole!

Find additional information below in Column 3

Green and Healthy Schools

Background

Many public schools need upgrades to be more environmentally friendly and healthy.

Campaign Promises

Mamdani plans to introduce renewable energy infrastructure in schools, improve air conditioning systems, and transform asphalt schoolyards into green spaces. Furthermore, he intends to create 15,000 union jobs and prepare 50 schools to serve as safe shelters during disasters, while also equipping them to function as hubs for educational instruction.

Previous Policy Changes

There were no policies in February.

March Policy Changes

Mamdani announced that within three years, all New York City schools will be included in [15 mph slow zones](#). The New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) will work on improving intersection designs and installing speed bumps.

Affordable Housing

Background

For various reasons, including New York City encouraging private developers to construct new buildings with "luxury" apartments geared toward the wealthy, there is a shortage of affordable housing, and nowadays, many residents cannot afford rent.

Campaign Promises

Under Mamdani's plan, 200,000 units of "affordable housing" are scheduled to be built over a ten-year period. The plan calls for all of these units to be designated as "rent-stabilized apartments."

Previous Policy Changes

In February, Mamdani launched the "Timball Terrace" project, providing 341 residential units.

March Policy Changes

Mayor Mamdani announced "[Neighborhood Builders Fast Track](#)," a program to accelerate the construction of affordable housing on city-managed land. Under this program, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) can pre-screen housing developers, potentially shortening the development proposal process by eight months. Additionally, this allows the time required for selecting contractors to be cut in half.

Community Safety

Background

Like other cities in the United States, New York City has a crime problem.

Campaign Promises

Mamdani will create the Community Safety Bureau, which will prevent crime before it occurs. Based on research findings, Mamdani plans to implement mental health initiatives and station specialized staff—specifically outreach workers—at subway stations. Additionally, he is considering utilizing vacant buildings to establish medical facilities.

Previous Policy Changes

There were no policy updates in February.

March Policy Changes

Mayor Mamdani announced the establishment of a new [Office of Community Safety](#) to dispatch specialists instead of police officers during mental health-related incidents. However, as it is still in the startup phase, only two people will be hired at this time, and the initial plan is to implement small-scale changes to emergency call responses. Additionally, Mayor Mamdani plans to expand B-HEARD, a program that dispatches specialists in response to emergency calls. Prior to Mayor Mamdani, this program had been struggling due to a lack of budget.

DOWN THE POTHOLE!

Additional Insights to Learn About American Government

1

How can the governor obligate that amount of money?

The governor allocates these funds in his/her/their proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year. To implement this budget, the state legislation needs to pass it. In this case, the budget was passed. The claim may be misleading by creating the idea

2

Why do mayors fail to implement bike lanes?

Regulations make it difficult to implement bike and bus lanes according to plan. A 2011 NYC law requires the DOT to present plans to affected community boards before installing any new bike lanes.

3

What gives the court the authority to order the landlord to pay penalties?

The court's responsibility is to uphold the law. Because there are legislative statutes and contract laws, it is the court's responsibility to make sure these laws are not violated. If these laws are violated, then it's the courts'

that she can just spontaneously allocate funds, but in this case, the funds had already been allocated, and she simply brought them up in a press conference.

Afterwards, the community has the right to request a public hearing with DOT to discuss the construction. This policy is known to increase construction time frames by years due to opposition from communities, who oftentimes are not supportive of bike lanes for various reasons, such as reduced parking, increased traffic, and safety. The negative views are usually over-represented in these hearings.

Can City Council require the Mayor's office to engage in its plan to build Bike and Bus lanes?

Yes, as a legislative body, any law it passes (assuming the law does not conflict with state or federal law) needs to be implemented, with some amount of discretion, by the executive body, which in this case is the mayor's office. Think about the scenario as a regular citizen. We must follow any passed law, and so does the mayor. The mayor also has to follow laws that apply to their office, and that may not apply to the average citizen.

Who is responsible for implementing these policies?

The NYCDOT is responsible for planning, designing, and implementing bike lanes. This is for various reasons, one being that it is the executive body responsible for bike lanes. NYC Charter 71 gives NYCDOT broad control over streets. Additionally, the NYC Street Plan mandates DOT (specifically) to install 250 miles of protected bike lanes. This gives DOT the legal authority to implement the projects.

responsibility to correct this injustice by ordering certain actions, punishments, or compensatory payments. The court often penalizes based on financial consequences written within the law itself. Additionally, if a landlord ignores a judicial order, the court can use its contempt power to impose additional penalties. Oftentimes, lawsuits are used to bring violations before a judge.

Did the City sue the landlords on the list?

The City sued the #2 worst landlord on the list (the first landlord was punished during the Adams' administration). The typical process starts with the HPD finding a landlord breaking the law, in which case they will issue a ticket which includes a notification of a violation and a fine. However, some landlords still do not take action. In this case, legal action can be pursued by either the individual, collective action groups, or sometimes the city, like in this case. Additionally, Mamdani has threatened further legal action against this landlord if violations are not resolved by mid-April. Rarely, landlords can be arrested if their actions become criminal. Typically, it falls on the individual/public to take care of legal action instead of the city.