



**Transcript of Governor David A. Paterson's
Remarks on the World Trade Center Rebuilding
Office of the Governor, New York, NY
October 2, 2008**

Good afternoon, everyone.

I want to thank Mayor Bloomberg for joining us. The Chair of the Port Authority, Anthony Coscia, is with us today. So is the Vice Chair, Henry Silverman, who has joined us as well. And Chris Ward, the Executive Director of the Port Authority, is here.

I want to thank Chris Ward, who I appointed four months ago, and who has, in a short period of time, unraveled one of the most complicated construction arrangements that not only this nation, but probably this world, has ever seen—to a point that, I think I can say with certainty, we are on track.

And so, Chris, to you, and to all the staff of the Port Authority; Chairman Coscia, for your participation, which has been rather immense; Mr. Mayor; I see Deputy Mayor Lieber is here, he has been involved all along; I must say that Deputy Mayor Sheekey played a very important role right up until the last minute; I want to thank you. It would take a number of hardworking, steadfast, disciplined people to bring us to where we are in such a short period of time.

Three weeks ago, we all marked the seventh anniversary of an attack on this country, on our own soil, which claimed almost 2,800 lives in this area, that also was felt in another state and in the District of Columbia.

We attended the events—the readings of the names of the lost in the ceremonies in Zuccotti Park. We then went to the ceremony held in a church for the 84 employees of the Port Authority whose heroism and efforts cost them their lives that day. We visited the Voices of September 11th luncheon, where we met with many of the families of the victims who didn't come home that day. And we also met with the children—Tuesday's Children—the ones who lost mothers and fathers on that day.

All of that, and the other events we attended that day, indented in us the need for a suitable, beautiful and dignified memorial to the families.

For New York State, and particularly for New York City, there is a further requirement that we enhance New York's position as the international capital of finance and one of the great economic development leaders.

But when I came into office six months ago, I observed that we were not only falling short of those noble goals, but that we were very much off track.

It's alarming that, in six and a half years, in my perusal just in the first days of my administration, I couldn't really find anyone who knew what was being built, who was building it, when it would be completed, and in what fashion it would be erected.

Therefore, in June, I appointed Chris Ward. I asked him to give me a report in three weeks. I asked him to spare us any spin, any gloss, or any false optimism. We wanted the truth about the situation at Ground Zero.

When Chris came back three weeks later, he showed us a tale of unrealistic expectations, and 15 unaccounted-for obstacles regarding construction and cost—15 unresolved issues, without which we couldn't even begin construction on all the plans for Ground Zero.

He and his staff worked until yesterday, September 30, the agreed-upon deadline. They asked the hard questions. They made the tough decisions. And they have brought back a plan. Now we do know what's being built. Now we do know who's going to build it. We know when it's going to be built. And we know how it will be established.

We can't thank them enough for this amount of work in such a short period of time. It is chronicled in the Port Authority's World Trade Center Road Map, which we're going to make available for you today. To all who were involved, I want to thank them for that effort.

Before turning the microphone over to the Mayor, I'd like to address two fundamental issues.

First, the issue of our solemn promise to the families, and to all those who want to memorialize those who were lost on September 11. This process needs closure, especially because so many of those who lost their lives never had their bodies recovered, and it continues to haunt their loved ones and their friends.

After looking at the construction solutions that Chris Ward and the staff of the Port Authority have been able to establish, I am comfortable today with telling you that on September 11, 2011, ten years to the date of that disaster, there will be an open memorial at Ground Zero to those who lost their lives that day.

When Chris speaks he will elaborate further and set the parameters for that, but we're very happy to tell you that.

In addition, the final design for the World Trade Center Transportation Hub has now been completed. This will expand transportation interests in two states and in all of the five boroughs. It will preserve the idea of the public space use that has been advocated and also will not interfere with any of the other construction that will take place on that site. As a matter of fact, we think that we will begin the procurement of cement and steel for this process some time in November.

Now, I know that all sounds fine, but I know that many of you must be thinking, “We’ve heard the goals and timetables before. What’s different about this process?”

This is what’s different. For the first time, we have an understanding of the construction realities on the ground. That’s because of the resolution of the 15 obstacles to construction and obstacles to cost that we have resolved.

For the first time, this plan incorporates risk. I think what may have happened after the original tragedy is that, in an attempt to be resilient and to help New Yorkers get past the incident of that horrific day, there was a desire to go as quickly as possible.

And so, a design might, for instance, guarantee that something could be done in a certain timetable if it doesn’t rain. But it always rains. What we’ve done is, we’ve evaluated and analyzed the risk as it goes into the performance of duty.

And so, actually, if we were lucky in the way that others have planned, we might actually bring it in earlier. But we are confident that we can tell you that the matters we’ve set forth today can happen in a seasonable period.

And finally, this is the first time we have real accountability. We have an accountability standard for each project, and we have milestones and timetables built within the projects themselves.

So when you add all of that up, you recognize that we are able to stand here and put forth a plan that will be calibrated to a realistic timetable.

This doesn’t make this job any easier. There are significant challenges that we’re going to have to face and we’re going to have to overcome.

But there certainly is an enhanced spirit today because of the work of all those at the Port Authority and the cooperation of all the other entities, particularly the City of New York. And I’d like to introduce for comment now Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

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