Thank you to Chair Rodriguez, Council Members Dromm, Garodnick, Vacca, Koslowitz, and Members of the Committee on Transportation for allowing me the opportunity to testify here today. My name is Caitlin Lewis, Director of External Affairs for the Times Square Alliance.

The Times Square Alliance, founded in 1992, is a business improvement district focused on public space management, local business promotion, economic development and public improvements, and advocacy on behalf of our constituents.

We commend this effort to bring coherence to the many rules and regulations governing the placement, use and maintenance of newsracks on New York City streets and sidewalks. This will serve the communities where newsracks are often placed, as well as the agencies that make permitting and regulatory decisions with regards to our public spaces.

We appreciate the attention paid to community consultation, as in Intro. 412, which requires newsrack owners to consult with the City and local community board members on newsrack placement decisions. We also encourage communication with BIDs and other neighborhood organizations that have a holistic understanding of the area in question.

In general, whenever an encumbrance is placed on a public sidewalk, we believe that there should be a high-level consideration of the neighborhood’s facts and circumstances, including pedestrian flow and density of the surrounding area. In Times Square, for example, pedestrian counts range from 350,000 to as many as 480,000 people passing through each day. We feel that whenever any encumbrance is to be placed on a sidewalk in the area, this significant pedestrian congestion should be taken into account when deciding upon the appropriateness of location. Intro. 427 in particular places stricter measurements on newsrack locations on city streets, which will help to decongest areas such as Times Square.

While we support Intro. 687, we also feel strongly that hotel loading zones should be added to this list, as these areas have trucks constantly entering and exiting and sidewalk encumbrances often prove problematic.

Ultimately, the Times Square Alliance urges the Council to pass these bills that will allow the City to better regulate newsracks on city streets and sidewalks and to communicate with newsrack owners.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and for your attention to this important topic.