

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

CC:

Acting Lieutenant Governor Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Commissioner Marie Therese Dominguez
Speaker Carl E. Heastie, Assembly
Senator Tim Kennedy, Chair, Transportation Committee
Assemblymember William Magnarelli, Chair, Transportation Committee
Senator Leroy Comrie, Chair, Corporations, Authorities, and Commissions Committee
Assemblymember Amy Paulin, Chair, Corporations, Authorities, and Commissions Committee
Senator Andrew Gounardes, Budget and Revenue Committee
Assemblymember Helene Weinstein, Chair, Ways and Means Committee
Senator Todd Kaminsky, Chair, Standing Comm on Environmental Conservation
Assemblymember Steve Englebright, Chair, Standing Comm on Environmental Conservation

April 22, 2022

Re: Prioritize Federal Infrastructure Funds for Mass Transit and Climate Goals, Not Projects That Divide Communities Like Highway Widening

Dear Governor Hochul,

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) is the single largest investment in infrastructure and transportation our nation has ever seen. It has the potential to do a lot of good for New York State. **We ask that you use IIJA funds in ways that prioritize equity, the environment, safety, and the economy – in particular in support of our state’s mass transit systems.**

You have voiced support for prioritizing environment and equity projects. Your recent State of the State was bold, unequivocal, and in line with these principles. Now that the budget has passed and your administration begins to delineate and implement the FY23 capital budget, we urge you to avoid undermining these goals with highway widening projects, such as the Van Wyck, Kew Gardens, and State Route 17 expansions. Additionally, we would like to see the New York State Department of Transportation access funds from the IIJA, including the Carbon Reduction Program, Resiliency Fund, Accessibility Fund, and Safe Streets Fund, to invest in public transit, accessibility, first/last mile mobility hubs, greenways, and bicycling/pedestrian projects. Under IIJA, NYSDOT has the authority to transfer a significant portion of funds from the National Highway Performance Program (which was increased dramatically under IIJA) to transit and other non-highway oriented qualifying projects. We urge you to take advantage of the

unprecedented flexibility the USDOT is providing in how to spend these funds to achieve our climate goals.

Unfortunately, while IIJA provides many opportunities to improve the infrastructure of our State, the bill also has the potential to do significant harm as we stand on the precipice of catastrophic climate change. The IIJA maintains the 80/20 split in funding for roads and transit. So, even though the total dollar amount represents a historic level of funding for transit, the bill is also the biggest investment in highways and roads since the Interstate Highway Bill was signed into law by President Eisenhower. Maintaining this ratio of funding for roads and highways is nothing short of catastrophic. We cannot meaningfully reduce transportation-related carbon emissions nor move toward a more equitable, accessible society without first breaking the status-quo of how transportation spending has traditionally been conceived.

Fortunately, the U.S. Department of Transportation incorporated unprecedented flexibility in the implementation possibilities of spending from the bill, allowing states tremendous discretion over spending priorities. In addition, following [guidance of the FHWA](#), you have the power to invest these funds in ways that prioritize equity, the environment, safety, and the economy.

Today, with your leadership, we have an historic opportunity to catalyze mode shift, increase mass transit use, meet climate change goals, increase resiliency, improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists, improve accessibility for people with disabilities, and mitigate air pollution damage in vulnerable and other communities that predominantly consist of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).

Today, due to an overreliance on cars, millions of New Yorkers suffer from some of the worst congestion in the country, which correlates with high rates of negative health outcomes related to emissions and pollution, such as lung cancer and asthma, disproportionately impacting environmental justice and disadvantaged communities. Congestion creates a drag on our economy by creating delays, reducing productivity, and slowing the movement of goods. New Yorkers who cannot afford to drive—or are unable to drive—are excluded from fully participating in our economy and society. As we build back our economy, we know that a balanced and sustainable transportation network is a key competitive edge for businesses looking to relocate their headquarters and offices, and for people looking for good-paying jobs and a higher quality of life.

Across our state, local jurisdictions and transit agencies are raising revenue to maintain, operate, and expand public transit. Without the necessary support from NYSDOT, local communities face a disproportionate burden. Transportation accounts for over 30% of New York's total greenhouse gas emissions, which means that sustainability in this sector is a key part of our move to a cleaner, greener, more equitable New York. Reducing our state's reliance on private automobile transport by improving public transit, active transport, and micromobility are necessary and feasible steps to meeting our climate goals while growing the state's economy. With laser focus and creative thinking, by breaking from the traditional focus on roads and highways, NYSDOT can use the IIJA funds to achieve these critical goals.

We look forward to continuing the conversation with you and your staff about how NY State can best leverage IIJA funds to reduce climate change; mitigate damage from carbon-based fuel; improve health outcomes; and encourage the public's move to safe, reliable, efficient mass and multi-modal transit.

Sincerely,

Rena Reynolds, Executive Director
Tri-State Transportation Campaign

Betsy Plum, Executive Director
Riders Alliance

Eric McClure, Executive Director
StreetsPAC

Sara Lind, Director of Policy
Open Plans

Jean Ryan, President
Disabled In Action of Metropolitan NY

Jessica Murray, Organizer
Rise and Resist Elevator Action Group

John Choe, Executive Director
Greater Flushing Chamber of Commerce

Kate Slevin, Executive Vice President
Regional Plan Association

Elizabeth Adams, Senior Director for Advocacy & Organizing
Transportation Alternatives

Alex Matthiessen, Director
Move NY Campaign

Lisa Daglian, Executive Director
Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC)

Christopher Schuyler, Senior Staff Attorney
Disability Justice Program, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest

John Kaehny, Executive Director
Reinvent Albany

Julie Tighe, President
New York League of Conservation Voters

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Arif Khan
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