

March 1, 2023

Hon. Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Majority Leader
New York State Senate

Hon. Carl E. Heastie
Speaker
New York State Assembly

Via email

Dear Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and Speaker Heastie:

We write for millions of public transit riders who need and deserve frequent, reliable, accessible and affordable service. Four years ago, we were part of the historic campaign that won congestion pricing, which will upgrade our transit infrastructure after decades of deferred maintenance. Congestion pricing is law because of your leadership. New York's innovative program will soon fund new signals, elevators, and more as the main funding source for the MTA Capital Program. But the authority now faces an operating budget fiscal cliff after the pandemic triggered its worst ever financial crisis.

We urge you to target new investment to keep buses and trains running and meet riders' changing needs while public transit leaders fix the network New York depends on. The executive budget would keep trains and buses running at pre-pandemic levels as the MTA rebuilds ridership. Proposed changes to the payroll mobility tax and City contribution provide a critical path forward. They will avert massive service cuts and fare hikes that would drive riders away from the system.

We encourage you to negotiate a budget that builds on the governor's foundation and better meets riders' growing need for off-peak service by adding \$300 million for more frequent buses and trains. More frequent public transit outside of the 9-to-5 office rush hour, when many service-sector workers must commute, will attract more riders, improve safety, make the transit system fairer and help New York both adapt to and mitigate climate change.

While congestion pricing will help deliver the modern, reliable and accessible public transit New Yorkers deserve, a sustainable operating model and more frequent off-peak service will make the system work better for everyone. By funding and expanding transit operations in this year's budget, New York will be even better prepared for the advent of the central business district toll early next year. Ultimately, there will be a virtuous cycle in which better transit attracts more riders, and more resources are available to improve the network even further. An investment now will also help avoid the need for additional emergency measures later and create a more self-sustaining transit system.

As in 2019, the diverse stakeholders in the future of our public transit system look to your leadership to invest in New York's continued success and unparalleled access to opportunity.

Sincerely,

Disabled in Action

Environmental Defense Fund

Families for Safe Streets

MoveNY

New York Lawyers for the Public Interest

New York League of Conservation Voters

New York Public Interest Research Group

Open Plans

Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC)

Regional Plan Association

Riders Alliance

Rise and Resist Elevator Action Group

StreetsPAC

Transportation Alternatives

Tri-State Transportation Campaign

Cc:

Senators Leroy Comrie, Tim Kennedy, and Liz Krueger

Assembly Members Helene Weinstein and Kenneth Zebrowski

Deputy Secretary to the Governor for Transportation Nivardo Lopez

MTA Deputy Chief External Relations Officer Juliette Michaelson

MTA Deputy Chief of Government and Community Relations Will Schwartz