



October 1, 2024

Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor
Executive Chamber
Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Majority Leader
New York State Senate
Legislative Office Building 907
Albany, NY 12247

Honorable Carl Heastie
Speaker
New York State Assembly
Legislative Office Building 932
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Governor Hochul, Leader Stewart-Cousins and Speaker Heastie,

The MTA recently released its 2025-2029 Capital Plan, which outlines a comprehensive vision to improve, modernize and protect New York's transit system. Over the past century, this network has served as the lifeblood of the city, successfully powering the region into global prominence. The heavy reliance of the region's residents, workforce and visitors on the subways, buses and trains that make up the MTA's system is the reason why New York City has one of the lowest per capita greenhouse gas emissions in the country. Simply put, a well-run, fully funded MTA is key to fighting the climate crisis.

However, climate change is an unprecedented force that poses an existential threat to the entire region, including the vast infrastructure needed to support mass transit. This is a pivotal moment that requires significant investment to protect the future of New York. Climate change is here, and it's only getting worse. In the past five years, we've witnessed firsthand how climate events have impaired the transit system. Flooding from Hurricane Ida submerged stations, causing shutdowns and extensive infrastructure damage. Tropical Storm Isaias and Hurricane Henri caused power outages, service disruptions and flooding that cost hundreds of millions of dollars to repair. Even everyday summer storms can overwhelm the system. Extreme heat, which will only become more frequent, has resulted in rail expansions that cause disruptions. The MTA's [Twenty-Year Needs Assessment](#) outlined what's required to keep the subways, buses, and commuter railroads from being inundated. Fully funding the next Capital Plan is essential to ensuring a functional transit system in the face of escalating climate threats.

Critically, mass transit is the way the vast majority of people, in particular those from low-income communities and communities of color, are able to get around the New York metropolitan region. Access to quality mass transit is the key for economic mobility and access to education and health care, which means fully funding the MTA is a matter of justice and equity.

The MTA is already taking active steps to combat climate change while protecting the system. The agency plans to transition [to emissions-free buses by 2040](#), modernize facilities to reduce fossil fuel use, and reduce energy use through energy management, regenerative energy, and storage. These efforts align with the [MTA's commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 85% by 2040](#), making the agency a leader in sustainable public transportation and improving the health of New Yorkers. But the agency needs significant investments to realize and accelerate these gains, including a faster transition to electric buses, and additional capital to purchase hybrid buses, rather than diesel, during the interim.

The investments in resilience through the next Capital Plan will be for naught if congestion pricing is not restarted. Not only does the agency lose out on \$15 billion in critical funding for planned resilience projects, including several hundred million earmarked for air quality improvements in environmental justice communities, but without the reduction in emissions promised by the program, climate change and the impacts of air pollution will continue to worsen.

The projects earmarked for funding from congestion pricing would also expand and improve the system, creating more reliable and convenient transit options, meeting the needs of the modern rider and increasing ridership. If the MTA capital plan is not fully funded, there is the risk that the MTA will be forced to forego much needed mass transit expansion plans, like the Second Avenue Subway, the Interborough Express, and modernization and electrification of the Long Island Rail Road. While state-of-good-repair projects are necessary to ensure reliability, every car trip that is replaced by transit helps us lower emissions and moves us forward in the fight against climate change. The more we can invest in the expansion of the system and enhancements that will grow ridership, the easier it will be for people to get out of their cars. This is important for achieving the emissions reduction goals in the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act – because we can't drive our way out of the climate crisis.

As you prepare to vote on the Capital Plan as members of the Capital Plan Review Board and subsequently return to Albany for session, we urge you to 1) vote in favor of the \$68.4 billion plan; 2) commit to fully funding the additional \$33 billion needed to implement the plan; and 3) move forward with the Congestion Pricing Program.

The MTA is New York's engine. Throughout its history, New York has demonstrated that investment in transit is the key to unlocking healthier communities, environmental justice, and economic growth—and that a failure to do so has dire consequences. As we face the challenges of combating and adapting to climate change, there is too much at stake to shortchange the system that New Yorkers rely on. We thank you for your leadership and stand ready to be a partner in these conversations.

Sincerely,

Julie Tighe
President
New York League of Conservation Voters

Roger Downs
Conservation Director
Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter

Jessica Ottney Mahar
New York Policy & Strategy Director
The Nature Conservancy

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