



Dear Members of New York's Congressional Delegation,

The undersigned organizations thank you for the work you are doing to support Americans during the COVID-19 crisis and to ensure that we have a strong, fair economic recovery. The pandemic has touched every aspect of our lives. Accordingly, federal relief and stimulus legislation must also have a wide scope, encompassing not just support for workers and small businesses but also support for the new green economy and the state and local programs that are working to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and particulate matter.

In the New York City metropolitan region, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) is one of our most important government partners in reducing emissions. According to the MTA's estimates, the existence of New York's mass transit system directly avoids a net 17 million metric tons of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions per year, and direct and indirect impacts taken together make emissions in the MTA region almost 30% lower than they otherwise would be.¹

Furthermore, system expansion and improved reliability for New York City Transit subways and buses, Metro-North Railroad, and the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) are necessary for New York State to achieve the ambitious climate goals that it has set, including an 85% reduction in GHG emissions by 2050.

¹ <https://new.mta.info/sustainability/transit-avoided-carbon>

In addition to climate change impacts, New York's robust mass transit system reduces particulate matter emissions because so many fewer commuters drive to work than would do so without the MTA. This is especially important because particulate matter emissions from transportation are disproportionately emitted in environmental justice communities, and we know now that poor local air quality is linked to worse health outcomes for COVID-19 patients. A robust, well-funded mass transit system makes New York more resilient to respiratory illness, while conversely severe budget cuts would undoubtedly lead to worse health outcomes in New York's least advantaged communities.

The MTA is currently facing the worst fiscal crisis in its history. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic ridership has declined by more than 90% in the subways, more than 80% on buses, 95% on Metro-North, and 90% on the LIRR.² In addition to the near-total collapse in farebox revenue, the MTA has also incurred hundreds of millions of dollars in new cleaning expenses to keep mass transit as safe as possible for essential workers.³ MTA leaders do not expect ridership to recover in this calendar year, even if the reopening of New York's economy proceeds smoothly and we avoid another serious COVID outbreak.

There is no doubt that as New York recovers from the pandemic many commuters will avoid the MTA, at least until there is a viable vaccine or treatment for COVID-19. Many of our organizations are working with the New York City government to minimize the impact this will have on traffic congestion and its attendant emissions. Regardless of what the City does, a core tool for avoiding a "carnageddon" situation of gridlock, increased GHG emissions, and worsened air quality is to ensure the MTA has the resources it needs to run frequent, reliable service that allows commuters to socially distance while traveling.

That's why we strongly urge Congress to include a minimum of \$3.9 billion in operating aid for the MTA in the next federal COVID-19 relief bill. We thank legislative leaders and members of the New York delegation in both houses for providing the MTA with \$3.9 billion in operating aid in March, and we thank the House of Representatives for including additional aid in the HEROES Act passed last month. As the Senate, House, and White House continue to negotiate the next relief bill, we ask that you please keep mass transit in mind and include the full amount that the MTA is requesting. Should the MTA not receive the federal aid it is requesting, the consequences for the New York metropolitan region's economy and environment would be catastrophic.

Thank you for your consideration and for all that you are doing during this crisis. We would be happy to discuss this funding request with you or your staff in more detail at your convenience.

² <https://ny.curbed.com/2020/3/24/21192454/coronavirus-nyc-transportation-subway-citi-bike-covid-19>
<https://www.recordonline.com/news/20200528/theres-no-rush-in-rush-hour-commuters-stay-home-trains-station-lots-are-empty>
<https://www.newsday.com/news/health/coronavirus/lirr-coronavirus-1.43585820>

³ <https://thecity.nyc/2020/04/nyc-subway-pandemic-cleaning-costs-could-soak-mta.html>

Sincerely,

New York League of Conservation Voters

WE ACT for Environmental Justice

Sierra Club

Environmental Advocates of New York

Environmental Defense Fund

Cc:

Senator Charles Schumer
Senator Kirsten Gillibrand
Representative Lee Zeldin
Representative Peter King
Representative Thomas Suozzi
Representative Kathleen Rice
Representative Gregory Meeks
Representative Grace Meng
Representative Nydia Velasquez
Representative Hakeem Jeffries
Representative Yvette Clarke
Representative Jerrold Nadler
Representative Max Rose
Representative Carolyn Maloney
Representative Adriano Espaillat
Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Representative Jose Serrano
Representative Eliot Engel
Representative Nita Lowey
Representative Sean Patrick Maloney
Representative Antonio Delgado
Representative Paul Tonko
Representative Elise Stefanik
Representative Anthony Brindisi
Representative Tom Reed
Representative John Katko
Representative Joseph Morelle
Representative Brian Higgins