

New York League of Conservation Voters
NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign
Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC)
Regional Plan Association
Riders Alliance
Reinvent Albany
Tri-State Transportation Campaign
Transportation Alternatives

Senator Chuck Schumer
Senator Kirsten Gillibrand
Representative Yvette Clark
Representative Antonio Delgado
Representative Eliot Engel
Representative Adriano Espaillat
Representative Hakeem Jeffries
Representative Peter King
Representative Nita Lowey
Representative Carolyn Maloney
Representative Sean Maloney

Representative Gregory Meeks
Representative Grace Meng
Representative Jerry Nadler
Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Representative Kathleen Rice
Representative Max Rose
Representative José Serrano
Representative Thomas Suozzi
Representative Nydia Velázquez
Representative Lee Zeldin

March 18, 2020

Re: The MTA Faces Crushing Financial Losses from COVID-19 and Must Be Saved By At Least \$4B in Federal Rescue Funds

Dear Members of the New York Congressional Delegation in the MTA Region,

The COVID-19 emergency is unprecedented in our lifetimes. Governor Cuomo says “(New York) government cannot meet this crisis without the capacity of the federal government.”¹ We agree, and as advocates for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) and the nearly nine million daily riders who use the system, urge you to ensure that the MTA is protected with a full federal aid package of at least \$4B as requested by the MTA in emergency operating support in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

The American Public Transit Association calculates the COVID-19 emergency will cost transit authorities across the country \$12.875B in the next year.² The MTA represents 38% of all passenger trips among all US public transit agencies, which would be \$4.9B of these funds based on its share of ridership.³ Should the MTA’s financial condition change further, we would support increased federal funds beyond the \$4B requested by the MTA.

¹ Bowden, John. “Cuomo: Coronavirus peak in NY could be in 45 days.” The Hill. March 17, 2020. <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/487992-cuomo-coronavirus-peak-could-be-in-45-days>

² See American Public Transportation Association (APTA) Legislative Action Alert, March 17, 2020. Available at:

http://www.magnetmail.net/actions/email_web_version.cfm?ep=1h_LtMVXXGHD6_gbnN-GKqhlIMNfi_jks9rg8wOyoEmS7Bpno4QA-KxluP0Mu2gcs2iRUrx-PeVnLzDCQLdoVhyIB7AFKc9ftt35Twynl2GM1Q21l6ePVwyo6ldsFw1h

³ Data from APTA’s Public Transportation Fact Book and related data sheets, <https://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/2020-APTA-Fact-Book-Appendix-B.xlsx>

A robust federal aid package should ensure the MTA can continue to operate at full capacity while supporting health care workers, essential government personnel and countless other working New Yorkers as the New York City region and New York State weather this unprecedented event.

We recognize that there will be many requests for federal aid, but we emphasize that without a fully functioning MTA, there will be no recovery in the New York City region or for New York State. Public transit is the lifeblood of our City; it powers the economy and enables the region's growth and success. Affordable, reliable transit is also essential to lifting up the most vulnerable New Yorkers who use it to access jobs, education, and other opportunities.

Even after institutions reopen and ridership improves, it is highly likely that the MTA's finances will be severely impacted by a sharp reduction in dedicated tax revenue caused by the damage to the regional economy from the COVID-19 emergency. City Comptroller Scott Stringer has projected city tax revenue to see at least \$3.2 billion in losses over the next 6 months.⁴ Estimates for the MTA's dedicated tax revenue reductions equivalent to the 2008 recession are for \$800 million in losses.⁵

It is your responsibility as federal officials to ensure that the MTA, along with vulnerable New Yorkers, will survive this pandemic. New York State and City governments will not be in a position to provide additional aid to the MTA beyond what has already been provided by its historic 2020-2024 Capital Plan, as they too will be hit by severely reduced tax revenues, as noted by Governor Cuomo and City Comptroller Stringer.

We also ask that you ensure congestion pricing obtains federal approval by the US Department of Transportation, so that it can provide \$15 billion in desperately needed capital funds. It is more important than ever that the MTA be on solid footing for its rebuilding and modernization needs, given the hit it will be taking to its operating budget.

Strong public transit is also essential to the nation's efforts to address climate change, and we cannot afford to see it decline when we must be encouraging mass transit ridership. At a time that the nation's airlines are asking for a \$50 billion bailout, the nation's largest public transit system must be protected and should be treated with equal if not greater urgency.

Thank you for your leadership during this crisis.

⁴ Deffenbaugh, Ryan. "Prolonged recession': City will lose \$3.2B in tax revenue, Stringer says." Crains NY Business. March 16, 2020.

https://www.crainsnewyork.com/coronavirus/prolonged-recession-city-will-lose-32b-tax-revenue-stringer-says?utm_source=breaking-news&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=20200316&utm_content=hero-headline

⁵ Gelinas, Nicole. "The MTA is weathering the corona crisis — but it's going to need help." New York Post. March 15, 2020.

<https://nypost.com/2020/03/15/the-mta-is-weathering-the-corona-crisis-but-its-going-to-need-help/>

Sincerely,

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Cc. Governor Andrew Cuomo
Members of the NYS Legislature
MTA Chairman/CEO Patrick Foye
MTA Board of Directors
MTA CFO Bob Foran