



Testimony to MTA Capital Program Oversight Committee On 20-Year Needs Assessment

MTA Must Add Detailed Cost Estimates for Achieving a State of Good Repair to Its 20-Year Needs Assessment

Monday, October 23, 2023

Good afternoon. I am Rachael Fauss, Senior Policy Advisor for Reinvent Albany. We advocate for more transparent and accountable New York government, including for authorities like the MTA.

We appreciate that the MTA released its [20-Year Needs Assessment](#), meeting the new statutory deadline, and that staff are working to publish its underlying data on the state's open data portal. (Relatedly, we thank MTA staff for recently publishing additional [procurement data](#) on the portal.)

The needs assessment argues that our transit system is in dire need of major maintenance, but oddly, it does not say broadly or in detail how much it will cost to achieve a state of good repair. Instead of showing exactly how much money will be needed to fix the subways, buses, and commuter railroads, the assessment instead only provides specific dollar figures for every expansion project, with scorecards measuring their relative benefits and costs.

We agree with the MTA that investing in a state of good repair must come first; this is crucial for everyday transit riders to get them where they need to go quickly and reliably. Expansion projects should be considered after a state of good repair is achieved, not instead of good repair. But, unfortunately, the MTA's 20-Year Needs Assessment got it backwards: to emphasize that investing in the state of good repair comes first, the MTA must provide a solid and well-supported cost estimate.

In advance of releasing the draft 2025-2029 capital plan, we ask the MTA to provide detailed cost estimates for the investments needed to achieve a state of good repair. We support Citizens Budget Commission's [request](#) for an addendum that includes:

- disaggregated cost and benefit estimates identifying what should be invested in the next 5 and 20 years for state of good repair and normal replacement; and
- the effect on service and potential long-run costs if investments aren't made.

Without complete costs for all of the MTA's state of good repair needs, it is impossible to assess whether the next capital plan will make the right investments. With limited resources, the MTA and state elected leaders must prioritize transit capital investments based on achieving a state of good repair that directly benefits millions of everyday transit riders – not politics or the allure of bright shiny objects.

Thank you for your consideration.