

June 26, 2025

Honorable Eric Adams
Mayor, City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor Adams,

As New York City Councilmembers and advocates, we write to express our serious disappointment and concern that you have once again refused to expand the Fair Fares program to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) in your Executive Budget this year.

At a moment when one in four New Yorkers cannot afford essentials like food, housing, and medical care, the Fair Fares program has a modest price tag but has the power to transform the lives of over 360,000 New Yorkers who now take part in the program. No other city program improves transportation equity while simultaneously addressing our city's affordability crisis.

During your budget address, you spoke at length about "making New York City more affordable for working-class people," but with the income cap at \$22,000 for an individual or just over \$45,000 for a family of four, nearly all working-class New Yorkers currently make too much to qualify for the Fair Fares program.

Raising the Fair Fares level to 200% of the FPL--\$30,120 for an individual or \$62,400 for a family of four--as the City Council has suggested in its [Preliminary Budget Response](#) by adding a \$60.8 million increase to a new baseline of \$157.1 million, would expand [eligibility to over 415,000 residents](#), including 160,000 regular commuters and minimum wage New Yorkers who are incredibly likely to be transit dependent.

Currently, New York City is the least generous of the [major U.S. cities](#) that offer a public transit discount for low-income residents, despite having one of the highest costs of living and the highest poverty rates. Nearly all other cities use 200% FPL as their income eligibility limit, and most also offer discounts on their commuter rail systems, which New York City currently does not do.

It's time to stop kicking the can down the road on this program and expand Fair Fares to 200% FPL. It's crucial we do this now, before the MTA fare increases scheduled to take place later this summer, making subways and buses more expensive for everyone. No one should have to choose between paying the fare or buying a meal.

We need your support to ensure we avoid a repeat of last year, where it took HRA six months to implement a 20% change due to onerous procedural requirements and missed deadlines. Working people deserve a half-price ride. They won't qualify unless we raise the income level to 200% of the FPL. Let's make New York more affordable for the working class together.

Respectfully signed,

Majority Whip and Transportation Committee Chair Selvena Brooks-Powers

Council Member Alexa Avilés

Council Member Carmen De La Rosa

Council Member Jennifer Gutiérrez

Council Member Shahana Hanif

Council Member Crystal Hudson

Council Member Rita Joseph

Council Member Shekar Krishnan

Council Member Linda Lee

Council Member Farah Louis

Council Member Julie Menin

Council Member Sandy Nurse

Council Member Chi Ossé

Council Member Keith Powers

Council Member Lincoln Restler

Council Member Rafael Salamanca Jr.

Council Member Sandra Ung

Council Member Nantasha Williams

David Jones, President & CEO, Community Service Society

Betsy Plum, Executive Director, Riders Alliance

Lisa Daglian, Executive Director, Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC)

Kate Slevin, Executive Vice President, Regional Plan Association

Harold Stolper, Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs

Natasha Elder, Regional Director, NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign

Rachael Fauss, Senior Policy Advisor, Reinvent Albany

Elizabeth Adams, Deputy Executive Director, Public Affairs, Transportation Alternatives

Renae Reynolds, Executive Director, Tri-State Transportation Campaign

Cc: Honorable Adrienne Adams
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City Hall
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Honorable Justin Brannan
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