



January 8, 2026

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State

Re: Make MTA's SCOUT program permanent, and expand it to 20 teams in your FY 2026-2027 State Budget

Dear Governor Hochul,

We write to express our enthusiastic support for the MTA's successful Subway Co-Response Outreach Teams (SCOUT) program, and ask you to make SCOUT permanent and expand it to 20 teams in your FY 2026-2027 budget.

Thank you for [providing \\$20 million to SCOUT](#) in FY 2025-2026 as part of your efforts to help the severely mentally ill people seeking refuge in the subway. We believe the SCOUT co-response model where mental health professionals – together with MTA police officers – provide a clinician-led approach to individuals with serious mental health needs is a key tool for getting people in crisis the help they need.¹

As you acknowledged at your [December 18, 2025 press conference](#) and in your [September 10, 2025 press release](#) regarding gains in subway safety, SCOUT has been a success and has expanded to 10 teams throughout the five boroughs.

We believe the expansion of SCOUT is working, and the time is right for you to expand the program to 20 teams, along with some case management enhancements, as part of your FY 2026-2027 budget – and make it permanent. The data emerging from the MTA about the SCOUT program shows that it is providing access to care to increasingly more individuals.

- The MTA Police Department's [October 29, 2025 Special Presentation](#) to the MTA Board highlighted increased SCOUT activities from 2024 to 2025:
 - Mental health transports from the subway to hospitals increased from 94 to 185
 - Medical transport from the subway to hospitals increased from 28 to 54
 - Placements of severely mentally ill people in supportive care increased from 80 to 146

¹ See also this recent profile in the New York Times demonstrating how the State Office of Mental Health's Transition to Home Unit helped one individual who previously spent years living on the streets and in the subways.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/12/24/nyregion/nyc-homeless-mentally-ill-treatment.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share>

- According to your [press release from December 18, 2025](#), in total, SCOUT teams have referred more than 900 people suffering from severe mental illness or life threatening medical conditions from the subways to healthcare providers, two-thirds of them voluntary. Collectively, these patients have received the help they need during more than 7,500 nights in hospital care.

We believe that SCOUT will scale extremely well. If you expand it to 20 teams, it will be far more than twice as effective because it will generate positive systemic changes in New York City's receiving hospitals, psychiatric ERs, case management systems, transitional housing, and supportive housing. We also appreciate that an increase to 20 SCOUT teams will result in more teams operating overnight, during off-hours, and on trains which will greatly help increase public awareness of and confidence in the MTA's safety, and its ability to address mental health crises in the subway.

We thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Kaehny
Executive Director
Reinvent Albany

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

Tom Wright
President and Chief Executive Officer
Regional Plan Association

cc: Janno Lieber, CEO, Metropolitan Transportation Authority
Jeremy Feigelson, Special Counsel, Metropolitan Transportation Authority
David Ullman, Deputy Secretary for Transportation, Executive Chamber
Sabrina Bierer, Deputy Secretary for Public Safety, Executive Chamber
Peter Hatch, Deputy Secretary for Human Services and Mental Hygiene, Executive Chamber