

November 12, 2021

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
Capitol Building, Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul:

As elected officials, organizers, and advocates, we appreciate the opportunity to partner with you and your team to build a stronger, fairer New York together. Already, in just a few short months, we have been refreshed by the new approach to leadership taking hold across our state.

As you know, the public transportation services offered by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and its 75,000 workers serve the needs of several million New Yorkers 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Those services are critical to the economy of the state of New York, the economy of the United States, and, to be sure, the global economy. **New York powers the world, and the MTA powers New York. But MTA services are now under significant threat owing to a “[precarious balance](#)” in its finances.**

It is more critical than ever—both because of the ongoing economic recovery and the impacts of climate change, like those we experienced repeatedly this fall—that the MTA ensures New Yorkers have fast, frequent, and reliable transportation. Just before the pandemic, New York’s unemployment rate was below 4% for twelve full months—now it is nearly twice that, at over 7.5%. Making cuts to the transportation network that allows New Yorkers to meet these challenges and opportunities will only slow our recovery, or worse, reverse it: New York University’s Rudin Center [predicted](#) last year that even one round of deep service cuts could cost our region 450,000 jobs in just a year’s time.

Meanwhile, changing work patterns, shifting responsibilities, and the rise of nontraditional jobs mean that transit service must become [more frequent](#) during midday, late at night, and on weekends. To mount a strong recovery and adapt to these changing work patterns, we must find a way to take the proposed “[right-sizing](#)” service cuts off the table. The MTA is the lifeblood of New York; jeopardizing it with service cuts when existing emergency funding runs out will grind our state to a halt.

We, the undersigned, a broad coalition of transit planners, non-profit organizations, economists, and elected leaders, call on you to make service expansions, not service reductions, that can meet New York’s changing needs and bolster its recovery. Austerity in the shape of fare hikes, service cuts, and job losses could not come at a worse time for our state.

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) recently announced a bold initiative to, rather than cut or even simply maintain service, *expand* service on both its bus and rail lines and *lower* fares in a direct bid to grow ridership and hasten the District’s recovery. While the financial conditions and infrastructure of WMATA differ from the MTA’s, the underlying motivation—making a bid on growth, recovery, and investment—is something that can, and must, be brought to New York. This means increasing off-peak frequency, fully funding reliability and accessibility improvements in the MTA

2020-2024 Capital Program, and building on the success of CityTicket and Atlantic Ticket by reducing Long Island Rail Road and Metro North fares for metro-area trips.

Meanwhile, long-term funding for the MTA's 2020-2024 Capital Program cannot come soon enough. The plan, which depends on \$15 billion raised by congestion pricing, includes modernizing obsolete subway signals, carrying out crucial state-of-good-repair work, and building towards full accessibility by 2035. We urge you to fully embrace a robust and fair program and implement it as quickly as possible. Congestion pricing promises not only badly needed billions of dollars but long-awaited relief from gridlock, air pollution, carbon emissions, and deadly collisions, which have spiked during the pandemic. MTA service must be set at a level that will support these public health, climate, and quality-of-life goals. Unless dramatic action is taken to switch commuters from cars to public transportation, conditions will only get worse: traffic jams in lower Manhattan have caused over 70 bus cancellations since April 2021.

For millions of transit riders, the bottom line is that service must be dependable for today's commuters *and* tomorrow's. The essential workers who are bringing New York through the pandemic deserve a system that rises to meet their contributions to our state. As the leader of our state with the power to determine the MTA's future direction, we urge you to make its growth a top priority. More and better service can breathe new life into a city that has faced such immense challenges in the past 18 months. **Frequent and reliable service at all times of the day brings significant quality of life improvements to millions of New Yorkers every day, all while positively defining a backbone of New York's image. New York can [afford](#) it. We can't afford the alternative.**

At its best, transit policy in New York has brought us creative new funding sources, seasoned global leaders, and an immensely dedicated workforce. We urge you to build on these successes and are encouraged by your willingness to work collaboratively with independent professionals at the MTA to keep doing better for New Yorkers.

Thank you for your appreciation of riders' needs and consideration of a bold transit policy agenda. By investing together in our common infrastructure, we ensure a bright future for all New Yorkers.

Signed,

Organizations

New York City Democratic Socialists of America, Ecosocialist Working Group

Riders Alliance

New York Working Families Party

Transportation Alternatives

Rise & Resist

Straphangers Campaign

New York Lawyers for the Public Interest

StreetsPAC

Community Voices Heard

Elected Representatives

Senator Alessandra Biaggi
Senator Jabari Brisport
Senator Leroy Comrie
Senator Brad Hoylman
Senator Michael Gianaris
Senator Andrew Gounardes
Senator Robert Jackson
Senator Brian Kavanagh
Senator Zellnor Myrie
Senator Gustavo Rivera
Senator Julia Salazar
Senator Luis Sepúlveda
Senator Jose Serrano
Assemblymember Peter Abbate
Assemblymember Khaleel Anderson
Assemblymember Brian Barnwell
Assemblymember Robert Carroll
Assemblymember Steve Englebright
Assemblymember Harvey Epstein
Assemblymember Nathalia Fernández
Assemblymember Phara Souffrant Forrest
Assemblymember Emily Gallagher
Assemblymember Jessica González-Rojas
Assemblymember Richard Gottfried
Assemblymember Andrew Hevesi
Assemblymember Zohran Mamdani
Assemblymember Marcela Mitaynes
Assemblymember Yuh-Line Niou
Assemblymember Dan Quart
Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal
Assemblymember Rebecca Seawright
Assemblymember Amanda Septimo
Assemblymember Jo Anne Simon

Individuals

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