

Testimony of
The New York Public Transit Association
(NYPTA)
For the Public Hearing of the
Assembly Standing Committee on Transportation
Impact of the State Budget on NYSDOT's Two-Year Capital Program
Albany, NY
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10:00 AM
Hearing Room C

Thank you Chairman Gantt and members of the Assembly Transportation Committee for giving the New York Public Transit Association (NYPTA) the opportunity to submit testimony before the Committee on the Impact of the State Budget on NYSDOT's Two-Year Capital Program.

The New York Public Transit Association is a not-for-profit association representing public transit agencies throughout the State. Our members include public transit providers, private sector manufacturers and suppliers, state agencies, and community advocates.

Demand for Transit Service is Growing

Transit ridership is rising in many areas of the state and both the public and business communities are demanding more and better service. Transit services provided across New York State are an important component of our regional transportation network and critical to the economic growth of our communities. The mobility provided by transit connects our citizens to jobs, businesses, education, recreation and health care. Adequate transit service is essential for our communities to thrive and compete for jobs.

Impact of 2015-16 State Budget

The transit industry appreciates the funding included in the 2015-16 state budget. This funding allowed us to maintain services this year, begin to address the backlog of capital needs and create jobs for transit suppliers.

However, while a good start, this funding will not allow transit systems to maintain services in the future or meet growing demands for more service. Meanwhile, the cost of providing service grows annually. Fuel costs are down but pension, health care and paratransit operating costs continue to rise. New York's transit systems strive to improve efficiency and productivity before asking for more assistance from riders and government. Passenger revenues are up, but adequate, predictable and inflation-sensitive funding for transit operations is still needed.

Continued state support will allow transit systems across the state to maintain essential services and respond to growing demand. The lack of growth in upstate transit funding must be addressed so that upstate transit systems can benefit from the same type of growing state aid as downstate systems.

While the state has appropriated badly needed capital funding over the past two budgets, transit systems have not yet had access to the \$10 million in remaining Transportation Bond Act funding contained in the 2014-15 Transportation MOU. These funds, approved by the voters back in 2005, should be creating jobs and improving infrastructure now, but have not been released.

NYPTA asks the Governor and Legislature to work to release these funds quickly so that they can be improving transit infrastructure and helping the economy.

Need for a Multi-year Statewide Transit Capital Program

There is an urgent need to invest \$500 million over the next 5 years to improve transit infrastructure upstate and in the downstate suburbs and support the growth of our communities. These systems

together would rank as the 7th largest transit system in the nation, ahead of major cities like Boston and Philadelphia.

All transit systems have vital infrastructure that requires maintenance and routine replacement to reach and maintain a state-of-good-repair while continuing to provide safe, reliable service. Over-age buses and rail cars need replacement; rail track needs to be upgraded; maintenance facilities need repair; and outdated fare collection and communications equipment need modernization. To respond to ridership growth, many systems need to expand their bus fleets.

The lack of funding for capital investment has led to worsening conditions of transit infrastructure and unnecessary maintenance expenses. For example:

- 46% of NFTA's buses are beyond their useful life.
- 57% of Broome County Transit's buses are beyond their useful life.
- 21% of CDTA's buses are beyond their useful life; and these buses cost twice as much to maintain as younger buses.
- RGRTA has a 40 year old decaying central maintenance facility that needs replacement.
- CNYRTA and Nassau County have 20 year old CNG fueling facilities that need replacement.

Our transit systems have identified \$1 billion in infrastructure investment needed over the next five years - more than 80 percent is for state of good repair improvements to core infrastructure. At current funding levels, resources available to transit systems from all levels of government are not sufficient to meet the identified infrastructure need. Expected funding will cover only 43% of the \$1 billion in needs, leaving a funding gap of \$577 million over the next five years.

The Governor has committed to providing \$8.3 billion to fund the MTA capital program. The rest of the state's transit systems deserve capital funding as well. There has been much discussion recently throughout the state on the need for upstate road and bridge funding to balance the transit funding announced for the MTA. Any state plan to fund transportation must include adequate funding for upstate and downstate suburban transit systems as well.

NYPTA recommends a state of investment of \$100 million per year in upstate and suburban downstate transit infrastructure, which will allow these systems to modernize aging infrastructure and continue to serve the public.

Conclusion

New York State benefits in many ways from the more than 100 transit systems throughout the State. Transit service provides mobility for all segments of our population and allows more people to participate in the economy. The transit industry appreciates the state funding provided in the past, and requests consideration of the capital and operating needs of all upstate and downstate transit systems. Increasing investment in transit infrastructure will lead to improved conditions, safer and more reliable service, and lower operating costs. Increased investment will also create and retain jobs for the state's transit manufacturers and suppliers.

NYPTA thanks you and the Committee for your past support of the public transit industry. We are committed to working alongside the Governor and the Legislature to ensure that transit can continue to contribute to economic revitalization across New York State.