

Statement of
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At the Hearing of the

Senate Standing Committees on Finance,
Energy and Telecommunications,
Environmental Conservation

Concerning the Implementation of the Climate Action Council
Final Scoping Plan

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10:00 AM

Thank you, Chairwoman Kruger, Chairman Parker, and Chairman Harckham, for inviting the New York Public Transit Association (NYPTA) to testify today on implementation of the Climate Action Council's (CAC) Final Scoping Plan. NYPTA represents more than one hundred transit systems throughout New York State, from the vast Metropolitan Transportation Authority system to CitiBus in Watertown. Our members also include transit manufacturers and suppliers, advocates, and other supporters.

NYPTA participated in the CAC's Transportation Advisory Committee chaired by DOT Commissioner Dominguez and supports the transit related recommendations contained in the Scoping Plan including the expansion of transit service and micro mobility. We support the Plan's approach of collaboration with the transit industry (and others) to implement the Plan's recommendations and the use of incentives to help transit systems transition to zero-emission vehicles (ZEV). Unfunded mandates with unrealistic deadlines will lead to missed opportunity. Collaboration, sufficient funding, and incentives are the key to the successful implementation of the transit recommendations in the Plan.

Transit's Record on Reducing Emissions

The public transportation industry has been a cornerstone of New York's environmental and energy goals for generations by delivering sustainable transportation services and providing affordable mobility alternatives. Public transit service is climate friendly - reducing the vehicle miles of travel from single occupancy vehicles and deploying cleaner energy solutions as they have become available including the transition to clean diesel fuel, compressed natural gas, and hybrid-electric propulsion technologies. New York State has the lowest energy use per capita in the nation due to its robust public transit system.

In 2020, the State directed the transit fleets of five large transit agencies¹ to transition to electric vehicles, with an aggressive goal of having 25% of these bus fleets electrified by 2025, and 100% by 2035. The state's largest transit system, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), has committed to a goal of purchasing only electric zero-emission buses by 2029 and is retrofitting their facilities to accommodate these electric vehicles. The MTA also recently received a grant from NYSERDA for two hydrogen fuel-cell electric buses to be operated out of the Gun Hill Depot in the Bronx. MTA's goal for full fleet conversion to zero-emission vehicles is 2040. Many other transit systems across the state have also begun purchasing or planning for battery-electric or other zero-emission buses.

Scoping Plan's Vision for 2030

The Scoping Plan's Vision for 2030 states:

"An aggressive and implementable mix of policies will be required to accelerate GHG emission reductions to the level needed by 2030. By 2030 nearly 100% of LDV sales and 40% or more of medium- and heavy-duty (MHD) vehicle sales must be zero-emission and a substantial portion of personal transportation in urbanized areas would be required to shift to public transportation and other low-carbon modes. New York can achieve these goals through ZEV sales requirements and accompanying incentives, investments to help achieve these mandates, historic investments in expanded public transportation and micro-mobility, enhanced bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, smart growth development, market-based policies that support lower-carbon transportation choices, and potentially a clean transportation standard

¹ Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA), Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA), Rochester-Genesee Regional Transportation Authority (RGRTA), Suffolk County Transit, and Westchester County Bee-line

that reduces the average carbon intensity of fuels as the transition to ZEVs proceeds”. (Scoping Plan page 147, underline added)

What We Like About The Plan

NYPTA supports the Scoping Plan’s specific transportation policies and strategies that would increase the availability, accessibility, reliability, and affordability of public transit services across the state and support transition to ZEVs including:

- Emphasis on expansion of public transportation service and mobility options.
- Community based transit enhancements including increasing routes, expanding frequency, introducing on-demand service, and micro mobility.
- Improving customer convenience and connectivity that makes transit easier to use.
- Cooperative approach for fleet transition to ZEV and state financial incentives.
- Support for smart growth strategies and mobility-oriented development.
- Forming partnerships with businesses and developers.
- Early consultation with transit agencies in local development decisions.
- The need to retrain the workforce.
- Directive to DEC and NYSERDA to develop a market-based clean transportation standard where credits will be generated by any type of electric transit vehicle.

Concerns With The Plan

NYPTA has several concerns with Plan including:

- Lack of specifics on the costs of the strategies and where sustainable revenues will come from.
- Heavy reliance on electric power solutions and less consideration of other alternatives that are available or emerge such as hydrogen or renewable natural gas.
- Future availability and reliability of zero-emission transit vehicles of various sizes and types needed to supply service that can support the required daily duty-cycles.
- The cost of increasing public transit fleets due to lower service range of zero-emission vehicles.
- Future cost, availability, and reliability of zero-emission fuels (electricity, green hydrogen).
- The impact of electric demand charges on developers of publicly accessible charging stations across the State and general cost escalations for both supply and delivery charges on transit fleets that greatly increase the cost of fueling vehicles.

Public transit system operations and capital investments are largely funded by the state, local, and federal governments, and existing funds for these purposes are constrained. For public transit to be successful in meeting climate change strategies, additional funds are needed in the near term to begin early action steps to increase the availability of public transit service and address the extraordinary capital cost to transition vehicles and facilities to zero-emission. To successfully transition to zero-emission fleets, transit systems will need to:

- Have access to various sizes and types of zero-emission public transit vehicles;
- Retrofit existing bus facilities or construct new facilities to accommodate a 100% conversion to zero-emission fleets including the required charging or fueling infrastructure;

- Access sufficient, affordable electric power, both on delivery and supply side, to charge hundreds of buses simultaneously in one or more fixed locations and in some cases while vehicles are operating in revenue service; and,
- Connect to the electric grid where capacity exists or build out the utility grid at the sponsors expense, to support one or more bus facilities.

The Plan recognizes and supports the benefits of changes in land use policies, site planning and transit-oriented development that will advance the efficiency of climate friendly transportation alternatives.

The transition to zero-emission technologies, whether fleet electrification or some other technology, will require significant financial resources from all levels of government. The draft Scoping Plan includes a discussion of transportation market based policies that if enacted, have the potential to generate some resources to help offset the significant increased cost to purchase zero-emission transit vehicles, modify maintenance/storage facilities to accommodate vehicle charging, and provide access to sufficient and affordable electric power. However, there is no road map included in the Plan that ensures the necessary resources will be available when needed.

NYPTA encourages the state to allow flexibility to consider renewable natural gas and hydrogen energy sources as alternative means for further decarbonizing the public transportation sector. This flexibility is especially important for transit agencies like CNYRTA which have large CNG powered fleets and fueling infrastructure.

NYPTA’s Recommendations to Successfully Implement the Plan

Transit systems large and small rely on government resources to fund operations and infrastructure. Sufficient and sustainable resources need to be identified and available to support both the provision of enhanced public transit services and the infrastructure investment required to support the goals and strategies detailed in the Scoping Plan.

Following are key actions that the state can take this year to advance the Scoping Plan’s transit recommendations:

- Begin to fund the Plan’s recommendations to expand public transit service and micro-mobility first mile/last mile services in the FY 2023-24 state budget, to provide a head start on growing transit ridership. Sustainable, dedicated operating assistance to transit systems across the state will allow planning for new services and provide assurance to new customers that services will grow and be available in the future.
- Increase funding to cover the additional capital costs to transition to zero-emission, including the additional cost of vehicles, charging equipment, retrofit of transit facilities, and make-ready costs to access electric power, recognizing that charging infrastructure needs to be in place prior to incorporating the vehicle.
- Provide flexibility for transit systems to choose the best zero-emission technology for their community and service needs. Do not mandate vehicle technologies as future advancements may yield more efficient and effective solutions.
- Begin discussions with the utility companies and NYISO to develop the necessary rules and rates to ensure sufficient, affordable power when needed as transition to ZEVs occurs.
- Enact policies that result in transit-oriented development.

- Improve local site selection processes by providing transit agencies with a seat at the table early in business location decisions.

State investment in the FY 2023-24 budget to expand transit service and micro-mobility not only supports achievement of climate goals, but also other state goals for economic development, affordable housing, downtown revitalization, social equity, and access to health care and education.

NYPTA members are already moving to zero-emission vehicles as the vehicle technology, available funding and local conditions allow. To be successful in this transition and deliver the best results to our communities, we ask the Governor and Legislature to avoid overly prescriptive legislation with unfunded mandates and unrealistic timelines.

NYPTA and its members stand ready to work with the Governor, Legislature, state agencies, utilities, and stakeholders to develop specific, workable actions to achieve the goals and implement the transit related strategies of the Scoping Plan.

Thank You