

Statement of
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(NYPTA)

At the Joint Hearing of the

Senate Standing Committee on Finance
&
Assembly Standing Committee on Ways and Means

Concerning the SFY 2019-20 Executive Budget Proposal
Relating to Transportation

Albany, NY

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9:30 AM

Hearing Room B

Thank you, Chairwoman Weinstein and Chairwoman Krueger, for your support of public transportation and for giving the New York Public Transit Association (NYPTA) the opportunity to testify today. And thank you Chairmen Kennedy and Magnarelli and Chairwoman Paulin for your leadership on transit issues.

My name is Bill Carpenter; I am the Chief Executive Officer for the Rochester-Genesee Regional Transportation Authority and the President of NYPTA.

Earlier you heard from MTA officials on their issues and needs, so I will concentrate on the issues and needs of transit systems in upstate New York and in the downstate suburbs.

Let me start by thanking the Governor for recognizing the importance of public transportation across the state in his Executive Budget and for proposing both an increase in state operating aid and a dedicated revenue source to pay for it.

This increase is appreciated and necessary to maintain essential transit services that serve customers in urban and rural areas throughout the State.

While significant, this increase does not afford the investment necessary for transit to provide the greater mobility that communities upstate and in the downstate suburbs need to support economic growth.

Demand for our services is growing; communities across the state want and expect more from public transit. They want better connections and travel options to work, education, shopping, and healthcare.

As the economic revival of our communities continues, more transit service and mobility choices are needed.

A 50% increase in funding over the next 5 years would provide a long-term state commitment to reimagined transit service that enables all communities to thrive.

Public transit drives the success of many important state programs, including downtown revitalization, economic development, access to jobs, reducing poverty, access to education and healthcare, sustainable communities, clean energy and environmental protection.

Greater investment in transit can accelerate the impact of all these initiatives.

For example, in Rochester, we would deliver more frequent, direct service to a larger percentage of our population, and better access to jobs for the 41% of households struggling to transition from poverty to prosperity. We would extend service for the increasing number of employees working non-traditional schedules and provide real-time information essential to grow ridership.

In Western New York, the NFTA would provide more frequent service, including on bus routes serving major transfer locations. Service hours would be extended, and bus shelters constructed at heavily used stops. Additional funding in the future would support expanded rail service.

In the Capital District, CDTA would increase bus frequencies and expand service hours on the majority of its network. Universal Access partnerships with employers would grow, more bike stations installed, and Bus Rapid Transit service expanded to cover 40 miles.

In Central New York, Centro would increase core service in Syracuse to cut waiting times in half, add bus coverage for second shift jobs, initiate service to Syracuse Airport, and increase bus frequencies in Utica. This will better serve growing employment centers and provide access to jobs in high poverty areas.

In Westchester County, Bee Line would increase frequencies on high volume routes and expand the span of service on weekends. Expanded bus service would provide better connectivity to the MTA system for one-quarter of Bee Line customers, and improve access to jobs, education and training opportunities for Westchester County residents.

In Nassau County, NICE Bus would increase frequencies and extend service hours to provide better access to 825,000 jobs in the County. New service would be provided to growing areas like Port Washington and connectivity to the LIRR would be improved. Over 1.3 million Nassau County residents would have high frequency bus service, an increase of 45%. Additionally, NICE would support the current ridership growth during weekends and late night by adding additional trips and expanding service throughout the system, making transit much more convenient and accessible.

Transit systems across the state are poised to transform their services and better help their communities to grow if more funding can be found.

Our submitted materials describe in greater detail the improvements that transit systems could make with more investment and the many benefits that result.

It is well known that the MTA needs long-term, sustainable funding to improve the subway, bus and commuter rail network, and the Executive Budget proposes actions to fund the MTA.

We believe it is time for **statewide** action – to address the long-term transit funding needs of communities across the state, so that no area is left behind.

The last state funding package in 2009 only addressed the MTA, ignoring transit riders in upstate and in the downstate suburbs. We should not make this mistake again.

Specific to the SFY 2019-20 state budget, NYPTA recommends a 10% increase in state operating aid for all upstate and downstate non-MTA transit systems, as part of a statewide plan to increase funding by 50% over the next 5 years.

We urge the Legislature to support the transit revenues proposed in the Executive Budget and enact the auto rental surcharge for upstate transit and the congestion tolling program for the MTA.

Maintaining the infrastructure is also a priority.

Transit systems have programmed available capital funding for projects that improve facilities, replace over-age buses, and soon will introduce electric vehicles.

Adding \$20 million in capital funds for non-MTA transit above the Executive Budget level (\$84.5 million) will continue the \$104.5 million funding level provided in the past two years (2017-18 and 2018-19).

The current state 5-year transportation capital program ends in 2020 and must be renewed next year. Upstate and suburban downstate transit systems have significant unfunded infrastructure needs which should be included in the next state capital program and in the Governor's \$150 billion infrastructure plan. We will provide details on these capital needs later this year.

Our smallest transit systems are often the most vulnerable. Unfortunately, the Executive Budget does not continue Department of Health funding for rural transit systems impacted by changes in the state's Medicaid transportation policy, threatening the viability of transportation to those who need it most.

NYPTA recommends \$5 million in funding from the Department of Health to retain essential rural transit services.

New York benefits in many ways from the more than 100 transit systems throughout the State, who deliver greater access through safe and reliable service. New York also benefits from investments that support hundreds of transit manufacturers and suppliers who create and retain thousands of private sector jobs.

Now is the time to increase investment in transit services and provide long-term, sustainable funding to **all** transit systems, as greater mobility and access are critical to economic success.

Thank you for your support of public transportation and we look forward to working with you on these issues.