

Hello Senators and Assembly members:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify at this hearing about funding for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority in the Executive Budget proposal.

My name is Tony Utano, president of Transport Workers Union Local 100. We are the 40,000 men and women who operate and maintain the MTA's bus and subway system in New York City.

We are the heroes moving the heroes in this pandemic.

New York City is still moving and functioning, and fighting back against COVID-19, because transit workers are out there, day and night, doing their jobs: driving buses and trains, cleaning and disinfecting stations, fixing tracks and signals, inspecting power cables and performing many other unseen tasks.

If New York City and New York State are going to rebound economically, as we all hope, then the MTA must be fully funded. If the MTA is forced to scale back on maintenance and inspections, then the system will slide right back into the horrible state of disrepair that erupted into a full-blown crisis in 2017.

There were nearly 70,000 subway train delays – just in the month of May alone – that year.

According to a report by the NYC Independent Budget Office, delays of that magnitude have a staggering economic impact: \$300 million in annual losses in work time over the course of a year.

Only you can prevent this from happening again. You have to make sure all tax revenues collected by the state that are supposed to be dedicated to mass transit operations are in fact appropriated and delivered to the MTA. Experts evaluating state and MTA budgets believe that hundreds of millions of dollars in dedicated funds have been withheld. This must be paid back to the MTA. In addition, experts say this budget proposal reduces revenue to the MTA by another \$1 billion.

You cannot let this happen.

Allowing the system to fall into disrepair due to inadequate funding would dishonor the memory of our fallen heroes. Putting the job security of transit

workers at risk because of inadequate funding, after all we have endured and sacrificed, would be an unforgiveable betrayal.

In addition to the funding issue, transit workers are looking to the Legislature address the unacceptable plague of abuse inflicted upon them at work – including spitting. Transit workers were spit on nearly 200 times last year. There were 212 spitting incidents against transit workers the year before.

Think about that. Roughly four times a week, someone walks up to a conductor or a bus operator or cleaner – and spits on them.

Why? Because there are no real consequences or deterrent for this disgusting behavior. Spitting on a transit worker isn't a crime. It's classified as a violation – like a parking ticket. Current law does not give transit workers the respect and protection they need and deserve.

TWU Local 100 urges you to enact the Executive Budget proposal that would make spitting on a transit worker a misdemeanor.

Thank you.

Pete Donohue

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