



New York State Senate and Assembly Joint Budget Hearing: Transportation
Public Testimony: The 2021-2022 Executive Budget
[ElectrifyNY Coalition](#)

Thank you, Chairpersons Weinstein and Krueger, for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the Transportation section of the 2021-2022 New York State Budget. We are members of Electrify New York, a statewide coalition of advocates for environmental justice, public transportation, social justice, and good jobs fighting for a clean, equitable electric transportation future for New York.

Our advocacy focuses on electrifying vehicles in New York, particularly public transit buses for all New Yorkers. We were pleased to see the continued commitment to full bus fleet electrification by 2040, with the inclusion of the second allocation of \$20 million to electrify bus fleets outside of the MTA service area. We are looking forward to seeing Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority, Rochester-Genesee Regional Transportation Authority, Capital District Transportation Authority, Suffolk County Transit, and the Bee-Line Bus System meet their electrification goals by 2035. By expediting the transition to electric buses, the state is making an investment to improve the air quality in communities most affected by transportation pollution, including those that live near highways and bus depots, which are overwhelmingly low-income communities and communities of color.

Using these zero-emission vehicles means fewer greenhouse gases and air pollutants, which will lower rates of asthma and premature death in these communities. We cannot wait to act: the pollution in the air caused by the combustion of fossil fuels increases vulnerability to COVID-19 and contributes to higher death rates in communities of color. That is why we urge the legislature to not only authorize the funds to electrify bus fleets but to ensure that the money is released and spent in a timely manner. We were excited to see the initial investment of \$20 million last year; however, none of the money was released for these transit systems to use, and we cannot afford to see that pattern continue this year. Communities need these funds to reduce emissions which improve air quality and health outcomes for many New Yorkers.

We were also glad to see the state's continued inclusion of \$3 billion to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority for ongoing capital funding, although the cuts to state mass transportation operating assistance to not only the MTA but all transit authorities are a concern. With authorities facing the pressing need to keep our transit operational, any capital funds often plug holes or float operations until another source becomes available. These operating budget cuts require transportation authorities to focus on the crisis in front of them--diverting attention from long-term goals. These put targets, including full-system electrification, at risk. We



encourage the Senate and Assembly to consider eliminating these cuts in their budget proposals.

As New York State continues to work towards achieving the emissions reduction targets established by the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, addressing on-road emissions will need to be a significant focus. The transportation sector is the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in the state. That is why it is imperative that all bus fleets make the transition to zero-emission vehicles. The Green Transit, Green Jobs bills (A2083 and A3090) accelerates this transition by phasing out purchases of fossil fuel-powered buses by 2029 and establishes contract standards for the procurement of zero emissions buses to create good green jobs. We urge you to put the Green Transit, Green Jobs bills into the budget to solidify the commitment to improve communities by both reducing emissions and supporting sustainable jobs.

The Green Jobs bill will stimulate growth of good jobs by transit agencies purchasing electric buses and charging infrastructure using best value contracting, and incentivizing bidders to commit to good wages, benefits, training and retirement programs, and targeting hiring in communities that are traditionally excluded from good jobs in the manufacturing sector. The electric bus industry in the United States is still nascent and has room to grow. By incentivizing in-state facility usage or development, the jobs supported by the Green Transit, Green Jobs bills could contribute to the growth of the transportation manufacturing industry located throughout upstate New York. New York has shown that our state is open to bus companies investing in our communities to support this new market for their products and create good green energy jobs. Benchmarks such as purchasing only zero-emissions buses by 2029 allow the electric bus industry the security to plan and expand capacity to ensure the transportation authorities can ramp up in enough time to meet their goals.

If we get the policy right, New York State's transition to electric buses has the potential to create thousands of good manufacturing jobs while advancing equity at the community level. By applying a good jobs and equity policy like the U.S. Employment Plan to the procurement of electric buses, New York State can ensure that the public dollars we collectively invest in building our state's clean transportation network also create job opportunities in the bus manufacturing sector, as well as training and apprenticeship programs for disadvantaged workers and people historically left out of the manufacturing sector, including women, people of color, returning citizens, and veterans.

While there is state funding in the budget to support these agencies' transitions, we want to encourage practical funding opportunities for them to not only purchase electric buses but also the infrastructure, grid upgrades, and personnel training they need to be successful. This



transition creates an overhaul of many existing practices and will require a thorough look at New York's funding and oversight of our public transportation. We look forward to the Legislature having an active role in this.

ElectrifyNY is excited to see these important steps forward to electrify our bus fleets. We see this as the first round of projects to implement the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act and create the fair green economy New York needs to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, combat climate change, and advance equity. We encourage this to be just the first step and look to also electrify municipal fleets, provide more charging infrastructure for personal electric vehicles, and support electrification of trucks and other heavy-duty vehicles in the state. Thank you.