



**New York State Joint Legislative Budget Hearing: Transportation Committee
February 15, 2022
Testimony from Via Transportation**

Transportation, as the leading source of greenhouse gas emissions in New York State, sits at the intersection of pandemic recovery, climate change, and equity. New York State has the opportunity to lead the country by creating a “Transportation Innovation Program” that will give upstate municipalities and non-MTA transit agencies incentives to deploy proven innovative transit technologies that can help transit ridership rebound, increase access to jobs, healthcare, and other essential services.

Via is a transit technology company headquartered in New York that works with more than 500 transit agencies and cities across the world to deliver innovative, equitable, and sustainable mobility solutions in communities big and small, urban and rural. We work with agencies and cities to do everything from deploying on-demand transit shuttles to helping them optimize their fixed route bus system to improving paratransit and providing new non-emergency medical travel options. To date, we’ve performed nearly 100 million rides as a company and facilitate millions of shared rides per month -- to riders of all physical and financial means.

In the last 18 months, we have heard from elected officials and transit agencies across the country who are grappling with ways to improve the quality of service and efficiency of public transportation in an environment where mobility needs and demands are ever-changing. This presents a particular challenge in low density, suburban and rural communities, where access to public transit is limited by travel times and distances, frequency of service, cost, and limitations in funding. That is why transit agencies and cities are turning to on-demand transit as a way to provide much more flexible and adaptable service to fill in gaps of fixed route networks. From the Western Region to the Hudson Valley, we have met with mayors, county transportation officials, and transit planners that are all grappling with having to do more with less, in an environment that requires more flexibility and adaptability.

On-demand transit technology can improve the quality-of-service and efficiency of suburban and rural public transportation, improving access to jobs and opportunities while also lowering the cost-per-trip compared to other options. Today, across the United States, transit agencies, cities, and rural communities are using transit technology to plan, design, and deliver public mobility services. In rural Baldwin County, Alabama, for example, Via has partnered to provide software that allows the county to serve a 2,000 sq mile area with 30 vehicles. Seniors going to buy groceries; students traveling to community college, and mobility impaired riders going to a



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dialysis appointment are all dispatched using the same system and fleet of vehicles -- all while meeting riders where they are. In Massachusetts, small cities such as Salem, Worcester, Newton, and Gloucester are all using on-demand shuttle systems to improve mobility in their communities with residents paying only \$2 per trip.

Some leaders in New York State are similarly innovating. In Suffolk County, for example, Via has partnered with the County and Hampton Jitney to provide Suffolk County On-Demand, which is already exceeding the ridership of the previous fixed route service -- all while providing shorter wait times and broader geographic coverage. Suburban and rural communities across New York are eager to better incorporate transit technology into their systems, but they need funding to innovate in similar ways.

A number of states have established grant programs to advance transportation projects that address equity, access, and a low-carbon future. California, for example, dedicated tens of millions of dollars last year to grant programs that are funding innovative and sustainable transportation to advance equity, including in suburban and rural parts of the state. The on-demand transit services in Massachusetts were funded by a discretionary program through its state department of transportation. We urge New York to do the same. The Empire State has the resources and opportunity to be a national leader in advancing mobility and equity through better transportation. NYSDOT should create a dedicated grant program for innovative mobility which will support innovative public transit services like on-demand transit in communities where it's especially difficult to live without a car. Expanding the reach of public transit through on-demand technology is good for the pocketbook, the economy, equity and access, and the environment.