

Transportation Submission

Dear Members of the Legislature:

In reviewing the executive budget on transportation, I would like to express my pleasure that you are accepting public comments from the People of the State of New York on the Executive Budget.

Public Transportation

First, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) is the lifeblood, in many ways, of New York City. It allows the transportation of millions of individuals daily around the largest city in the United States. However, the public authority is facing a three-billion-dollar deficit by the year 2026. Nevertheless, the proposal to fix the MTA has been issued with no fare hike, making the buses free, and having six-minute service on all subway lines and many bus routes. This proposal appears unaffordable, likely costing billions of dollars a year.

Instead, the Legislature should look at why the MTA has exceptional costs. While Grand Central Madison has recently opened, we need to ask why we are building stations deep underground. Why is expanding the Second Avenue Subway being considered at a cost of over three billion dollars per mile? The Transit Costs Project, scheduled for release on February 6, 2023¹, the date of the hearing, will likely share many issues. But overdesign of stations, building stations very deep with complicated elevators, and contractor costs are some considerations. Especially if the initial construction is not heavily subsidized by the Federal Government, the state should be wary of new capital construction.

I would also specifically urge the Interborough Express proposal to be rejected. The MTA should not be using a unique rolling stock for such an issue. The MTA should look at how we can reduce the weight of rail cars using the Federal Railroad Administration approval for lighter vehicles or even the subway fleet.

In addition, this also means that the MTA needs to ask why it costs tens of millions of dollars to build and install an elevator into a station to make it accessible. The fact that costs are excessive suggests transferring funds away from these flashy projects. These costs need to be controlled. In addition, we need to construct elevators in a significantly less expensive manner so that we can also reduce some paratransit costs, resulting in a net savings for the MTA.

In terms of maintenance, we need to look at why the MTA is reported to have higher costs and is less affordable. Luckily, some changes are being made in terms of maintenance, such as longer outages replacing often inefficient flagging, which would also make six-minute service unfeasible in many regards.

In addition, the MTA should be promoting bus lane enforcement throughout the City of New York through cameras on all buses and all bus routes, which is part K of the Executive Proposal.

Roads

The roads are being focused on, but our funding is not focused on what matters. Instead of focusing on ensuring that our roads and highways do not have potholes so that car maintenance costs are significantly reduced. The state, instead, is investing in an interchange in Long Island. In addition,

¹ <https://pedestrianobservations.com/2023/01/25/our-construction-costs-report/>

prioritizing resigning highways with no public comment period to mileage based signage with larger signs seem to be priorities. The pave our potholes program should be the top priority for road funding, not merely expanding road capacity.

I urge the state to be looking at our roads to keep proper maintenance, and not to promote highways. In addition, to discourage SUV's, which are more dangerous for pedestrians, cause greater damage to roads, and provide damage to roads. In the District of Columbia, they increased the fee to five hundred dollars for registration. Such an increased fee could help reduce high SUV ridership, which would also promote vision zero.

One last are that I would like to emphasize is that congestion pricing should be implemented as quickly as possible. The MTA should be focused on implementing the fee as quickly as possible. In order to reduce congestion and promote uniformity, exemptions should not be included for the MTA congestion pricing.

Other Areas

Allowing NYC to lower the speed limit should not be included in the budget, as it represents policy that appears to not have a fiscal impact. Thus, Part K of the Transportation Bill should be rejected by the Legislature. Using an "x" in the gender box does not have a fiscal impact, so expanding the Gender Recognition Act should be excluded from the budget.

Also, for DMV, the no fee non driver identification cards for individuals who are in the custody of the State makes sense in terms of identification. Providing such an identification, at no charge, as a matter of course would make sense. Nevertheless, these cards should be provided only when released from custody.

The Part H changes to Penal Law 120.05 should be rejected. Adding categories of individuals to the protection of this Penal Law makes certain classes of people protected and does not promote equality under the law. Rather, many of the status ideas should be rejected.

Sincerely,

Theo Allen