

NYS LEGISLATURE BUDGET TESTIMONY
MTA CHAIR AND CEO JANNO LIEBER
FEBRUARY 3, 2026

Thank you for the invitation to appear. I'm Janno Lieber, MTA Chair and CEO. I'm joined by MTA Chief Financial Officer Jai Patel, Chief Customer Officer Shanifah Rieara, and Chief of Policy and External Relations John McCarthy. Glad to be back with you for my fifth joint legislative budget hearing.

2025 was arguably the best year in MTA history, for a number of reasons:

- Hugely successful implementation of congestion pricing;
- Passage of the largest-ever MTA Capital Plan;
- Surging ridership and customer satisfaction;
- Best-ever subway crime stats;
- Record-setting construction of subway accessibility projects;
- And starting the SAS2 and IBX projects, to name a few.

Kudos to all of you who have supported Governor Hochul as we rebuilt and revived the MTA. In past years, I've come to you with some major front burner financial issue. This time is different. No tin cup, and that's because you've all been such great partners.

With Albany's support, combined with some aggressive cost containment measures on the MTA's part, we balanced our budget for a third year in a row. The most recent audit of this agency shows that, in real terms, we're spending 3% less overall than in 2019, even as we have dramatically increased subway, bus and commuter rail service. Out-year deficits have shrunk to half of one percent or less – something Wall Street has clearly noticed, since the rating agencies keep upgrading us.

Congestion pricing is not only underway but thriving, and we're starting to invest that money -- and a whole lot more – as part of the historic 2025-2029 Capital Plan you approved last year. \$68.4 billion for critical infrastructure upgrades like new rail cars, more ADA elevators, modern signals and upgraded power systems in your districts.

At our Board meeting last week, MTA Construction and Development President Jamie Torres-Springer announced that 2025 was our biggest year ever for capital commitments -- \$15.8 billion. More than \$5 billion of that was enabled by congestion pricing. And we're getting work done faster, better and cheaper than ever, saving more than \$3 billion since 2020.

In past years, you've heard me talk about below budget and ahead of schedule projects like Third Track and the L train rebuild. This time, I'll give you some new examples:

- the Park Avenue Viaduct project we've been talking about so much recently – 21 months ahead of schedule and \$94 million under budget;
- Rebuilding the Grand Central Train Shed – the bridge that literally holds up Park Avenue right over the tracks carrying 98% of MNR traffic -- \$20 million under budget for Phase 1, and we've secured \$70 million in private contributions for Phase 2.

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- New ADA elevators are being installed four times faster than in the past. We finished 10 in the last year alone and have another 41 in construction right now. More than 60 total are on the way as part of this capital program.
- And as part of our mission to put the system in a State of Good Repair, last year we replaced 73 elevators and escalators that had exceeded their useful life.

Every project completion supports our goal of delivering even better service for our customers. To run through ridership numbers quickly, New York City Transit [subways, buses and paratransit] carried 1.9 billion people in 2025. That's a 7% increase over the year before and 75% over where we were in 2021 when this team took over MTA leadership. The commuter railroads -- LIRR and Metro-North -- carried 150 million more customers with OTP for the year in the 97-98% range.

Riders are also coming back because they feel safer. Overall subway crime for the year was down 14% compared to 2019. It was our safest year in a generation, and it's no mystery why. Working closely with Governor Hochul and the NYPD, we've increased police officer deployments and mental health outreach through MTA's successful SCOUT program. I want to thank the Governor for announcing over \$90 million in additional funding for those initiatives in her State of the State address. Together, we've also installed tens of thousands of security cameras, plus platform barriers in more than 100 subway stations as well as brighter LED lighting.

The challenge going forward: how do we continue to make rapid progress? I know there's still much to be improved, and we need your help. Firstly, I know we all want to get rid of wasteful spending. I'm proud that the MTA has already cut \$500 million in recurring annual operating costs and that we'll cut another \$250 million by 2029. But the tort law system is sucking up money that should be spent on more and better service.

That's why I support Governor Hochul's auto insurance proposal, which is, of course, directed at reducing the cost for NYS drivers. But also important to us as the owners and operators of an almost 6,000-strong bus fleet. The MTA is a deep pocket that frequently gets sued, even if we're only 1% responsible for a crash. So, we appreciate the Governor's action here and I hope you'll be supporting it as well.

Second challenge: we need your help pushing the City on climate policy, specifically stormwater management. Every big storm – and they're only getting more frequent – torrential rainfall overwhelms the City system's capacity, causing severe flooding and stoppages in our subway system. Jamie Torres-Springer and his team at MTA C&D have some good ideas about where they can start.

We could also use your support in our ongoing challenges with Amtrak. I know many of you are looking for an update on Metro-North Penn Station Access, the project to bring railroad service to the East Bronx after 100 years of trains flying by without stopping. It's supposed to start running sometime next year, but that timeline is in jeopardy thanks to Amtrak. Pretty ironic, considering two-thirds of the Penn Access project is actually

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SOCR to fix broken and outdated components of their railroad. It is incredibly frustrating to be hamstrung by a partner that does not care about schedule or budget and resists efforts to give New York riders more frequent and affordable service. I know a lot of you are disappointed that Amtrak also decided to backpedal on their commitment to Governor Hochul to allow us to add new service to Albany.

The last item I want to mention is labor-related. As you know, we are preparing for a potential LIRR strike that we do not want, that could halt service for 270,000+ daily riders. We have been begging the unions involved to come to the table, but they are refusing to do so unless we agree to break the pattern that has been the basis of agreements with 70% of MTA's workforce.

We live in a pattern bargaining world – it's the only way to broker contracts with 80 separate unions. For us, insisting that MTA agree to break that pattern as a condition of even sitting down at the bargaining table seems unreasonable. We want to pay our workforce well, but we also want to put on more service, and we need to do things more efficiently to reconcile those goals – i.e. changing some of the insane work rules that tend to drive up costs. Long Islanders deserve better, and we want to give it to them.

With your support, we want to keep showing New Yorkers that this is a new MTA – a business-like government operation that is focused on results. Now we're happy to take your questions.