

**New York League of Conservation Voters
NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign
Pratt Center for Community Development
Reinvent Albany
Riders Alliance
Transportation Alternatives
Tri-State Transportation Campaign**

Some Key Transit Issues in 2014

**For NYS Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic and Asian Legislative Caucus
March 18, 2014**

1. **The Problem:** The proposed State budget takes back a pledge to use State general fund monies to pay the debt on some MTA bonds. Instead, the proposed State budget would substitute \$40 million in dedicated transit funds to meet the State commitment. The loss of these funds would put pressure on fares and service.

Goal: Block attempt by the Executive to divert \$40 million of dedicated transit funds.

Background: As part of a State effort to help the Metropolitan Transportation Authority in 2002, the State promised to pay the debt service on \$2.395 billion in “State Service Contract Bonds” – by using revenue from the General Fund. The Governor is now proposing to renege on the State's commitment to pay off \$40 million of the debt service with general fund money in this budget year. The proposed state budget would replace this general fund money with dedicated transit funds – from the Metropolitan Mass Transportation Operating Assistance Account. This diversion started last year with a \$20 million diversion of dedicated MMTOA funds, which we objected to at the time.

In the last decade, New York’s transit riders have endured a series of painful fare hikes and service cuts, and the MTA’s finances remain precarious. The Governor’s proposed diversions would amount to \$40 million that would not be available in this budget year for improving bus, subway and commuter rail service. Worse, if the Legislature does not act to restore the funding to the MTA, this diversion will amount to \$346 million over the next 17 years. That's \$20 million a year until 2031! The State of New York made a commitment to the MTA and its riders, and the State should respect that commitment and reject this diversion of dedicated transit funds.

2. **The Problem:** Bus service in New York City is slow and unreliable.

Goal: Build 20 new Select Bus Service/Bus Rapid Transit routes in the next four years. Cut running time, increase reliability and generate jumps in ridership.

Background: New York has the slowest and most unreliable buses in America. The victims of this poor service are those that make up the majority of bus riders: women, the elderly, people of color and low-income riders. Many of these riders also have the longest commutes in the nation.

All suffer the many harmful impacts of poorer access to jobs, education, and family. As of the 2010 Census Transportation Planning Package, 879,208 New Yorkers travel over 60 minutes to work each way; that's up from 758,000 in 2000. And over half of these long-suffering commuters are from households earning less than \$35,000 per year.

There are now six Select Bus Service routes around the city. They have been a big success, with significant increases in speed and reliability. A limited form of BRT, SBS features include paying fares prior to boarding; exclusive lanes that are enforced; entering or exiting at any of three doors; and bus stops that minimize conflict with traffic. Riders pay the same fare as for local bus service. While new subway lines can cost more than a billion a mile, SBS/BRT costs much, much less. The City Department of Transportation has also worked to meet with, and listen to, affected communities in planning the lines, improving its outreach along the way.

Mayor de Blasio put BRT at the center of his campaign, saying he supported phasing in “the creation of a citywide Bus Rapid Transit network with more than 20 lines, linking communities underserved by transit to the city’s primary transportation and employment hubs. These routes will offer one-seat commutes from Co-op City to the West Side, from Long Island City to LaGuardia Airport, from Flushing to Washington Heights, and from Bay Ridge to Jackson Heights. De Blasio will allocate funding from the city’s capital budget to accelerate implementation—at a fraction of the cost of major subway projects. Bus Rapid Transit has the potential to save outer-borough commuters hours off their commute times every week and stimulate economic activity in neighborhoods the subway system doesn’t reach.”

3. **The Problem:** Speeding in New York City.

Goal: Expand NYC Speed Cameras to Support Mayor de Blasio’s Vision Zero Plan

Background: Mayor de Blasio’s plan to prevent traffic crashes and deaths will not succeed unless he is able to fully utilize the same technology 135 other American cities and towns use to combat speeding. Speed is the #1 cause of fatal crashes in NYC- more than DUI and drivers on cell phones combined. More than a quarter of people killed in traffic in 2012 were killed by speeding drivers. Speed cameras deter drivers in other cities from going 10 mph+ over the speed limit because they provide consistent, predictable, citywide enforcement of the speed limit.

But NYC’s program only has 20 speed cameras to cover 2500 public and private schools. This program is far too small. The Governor’s budget proposal would allow Nassau and Suffolk counties, which are much smaller than NYC, to start their program with as many as 120 speed cameras. Please support that proposal. But also please push for parity - if New York City had as many cameras as Suffolk and Nassau, we’d have about 350. A program that big would help create the consistent, predictable, citywide deterrent we need to keep New Yorkers safe.

4. **One last point:** In October 2014, the MTA will present a \$30 billion-plus capital program to the legislature. It will likely be debated by the legislature in the spring of 2015. The plan is vital to providing safe, decent and reliable service. Its fate is likely to be linked to how roads and bridges fare.