



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR
Darrel J. Aubertine

Senate MTA Plan Comes with Commitment for Upstate

DARREL J. AUBERTINE March 16, 2009

| **COMMITTEE: TRANSPORTATION**

ALBANY (March 17, 2009)—State Senators David J. Valesky and Darrel J. Aubertine announced today that the Senate Majority's plan to provide solvency and transparency to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority comes with a commitment to Upstate road and bridge projects.

"The plan announced today will keep the MTA solvent and provide accountability, which has been sorely lacking in this authority for decades," Senator Aubertine said. "Certainly, a plan without rate hikes or cuts in services is a good move for our state's economy as a whole, but what we've gotten along with this legislation is a renewed commitment to Upstate which will ensure road and bridge projects throughout the state will be a priority as we put together a five-year plan."

This morning, Senate Majority Leader Malcolm A. Smith, joined by members of the Majority Conference, announced their plan to address the MTA's operating deficit, saving millions of commuters from crippling fare increases and service cuts. This financial rescue plan has been separated from capital project plans for the MTA and the state Department of Transportation, which will be ironed out later this year.

"Right now there is an influx of federal stimulus money going into targeted new capital projects across Upstate. As necessary as those projects are, a long-term approach is also needed to improve our roads and bridges and we have the commitment we sought for that," Senator Valesky said. "After we address the immediate financial crisis of the MTA we will double-down on our efforts to get a five-year plan in place for Upstate that will be vital to our economic growth."

The Senators said that they impressed upon their colleagues the need for a commitment to Upstate New York and said they would expect the same commitment from the Governor and the Assembly.

Millions of New Yorkers use the MTA annually, pumping tens of millions of dollars into our state's economy. The transportation system also provides revenue for the state which can be used to help Upstate develop long-term planning to meet transit and shipping needs.

Crucial to the Senate's plan are governance changes and greater measures of public oversight and transparency which would require the MTA to provide the honest accounting that New Yorkers deserve. A forensic audit of MTA finances to assure transparency over the next few months and the strengthening of State Comptroller oversight of finances and operating budgets will ensure that a strong commitment to fiscal responsibility and prudent spending practices are upheld.

Facing a staggering \$1.128 billion operating deficit which threatened the daily commute for the millions of New Yorkers who rely on mass transit, the MTA proposed extensive service cuts and fare increases of up to 23% for commuters, the vast majority of whom are middle and lower income earners who rely on the system to travel to and from work.