



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brian Kavanagh

## State Senators Call for Emergency Federal Funding for the MTA

BRIAN KAVANAGH August 5, 2020

| ISSUE: **COVID-19 AND THE MTA, MTA, FEDERAL FUNDING**



On August 5, 2020, Senator Kavanagh and his colleagues in the Senate wrote to the state's Congressional delegation to express strong support for emergency federal funding for public transit as New York continues to deal with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The text of the letter is below; the original may be viewed via the link above.

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August 5, 2020

Dear Members of the New York Congressional Delegation in the MTA Region,

We write as representatives of your constituents. As New York State Senators, we are responsible for overseeing the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, which includes New York City Subways and Buses, the Long Island Rail Road, and Metro-North Railroad. The largest public transit authority in the United States, the MTA's daily ridership reached a pre-COVID-19 high of nearly nine million people.

We are also reaching out to our fellow colleagues in our neighboring states of New Jersey and Connecticut to build a coalition and urge them to write similar letters to their congressional delegations. It is critical we work together to build momentum to include emergency relief funding for transit in the next COVID relief bill, given the vital economic, social, and environmental importance of the public transportation industry.

In recent years, we have voted repeatedly to create new funding streams at the state level to support the operations and growth of MTA services, without which the region would collapse. Now, however, those resources are outmatched by the devastation of the ongoing pandemic. We therefore turn to you for aid and request your support in moving forward a new emergency funding package that includes \$32-36 billion nationally for transit; of that, \$10.4 billion would fund the MTA through 2021, with \$3.9 billion to carry the MTA through the end of 2020. The alternative is bleak: deep service cuts or exorbitant fare hikes – none of which the region – or riders – can afford.

The COVID-19 emergency is unprecedented in our lifetimes. We agree with Governor Cuomo's assessment that "(New York) government cannot meet this crisis without the capacity of the federal government.

The New York region supplies almost 10% of the GDP, and the MTA is the essential engine that drives the region. A robust federal aid package should ensure the MTA can continue to operate at full capacity while supporting all those who worked through the pandemic to save lives and all those now returning to work – and life – as the New York City region and New York State reopen safely following this unprecedented event.

We recognize that there are many requests for federal aid, but we emphasize that the region cannot fully recover without a fully functioning MTA. Public transit is the lifeblood of our city and the entire tri-state region. Affordable, reliable transit is also essential to lifting up the most vulnerable New Yorkers who use it to access jobs, education, medical appointments, and other opportunities.

Even as institutions reopen and ridership improves, the MTA's finances will still be severely impacted by a sharp reduction in dedicated tax revenue caused by the damage to the regional economy from the COVID-19 emergency: the MTA estimates its losses to total \$10.4B through 2021. Through the end of this year alone, New York State Governor Cuomo anticipates a \$13 billion deficit, and New York City Comptroller Scott Stringer has projected city tax revenue losses of at least \$9 billion. While New York City and New York State have each allocated \$3 billion for the MTA's 2020-24 capital program, neither will be in a position to provide additional aid to the MTA. The uncertainty of federal funding means that critical construction projects could remain on hold if capital construction funds are flexed to pay for operations. While none of us like that scenario, we understand the necessity of maintaining regular service to safely transport the growing number of riders returning to the system, as the economy reopens.

Strong public transit is also essential to the region's and the nation's economic recovery and to the nation's efforts to address climate change. We cannot afford to see it decline when we must be encouraging mass transit ridership. The nation's largest public transit system must

be protected, and its critical needs should be treated with utmost urgency.

Thank you for your leadership during this crisis.

Yours In Service,

Leroy Comrie

District 14 | Queens

Chair Committee On

Corporations, Authorities & Commissions

Timothy M. Kennedy

District 63 | Buffalo

Chair Committee On Transportation

This letter is proudly co-authored and signed by the following 12 Senators:

Senator Joe Addabbo

Senator Jim Gaughran

Senator Monica R. Martinez

Senator Andrew Gounardes

Senator Brad Hoylman

Senator Liz Krueger

Senator Robert Jackson

Senator Roxanne J. Persaud

Senator James Skoufis

Senator James Sanders, Jr.

Senator Toby A. Stavisky

Senator Brian P. Kavanaugh