



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Kennedy and Dinowitz Join Advocates to Announce Push for "Green Transit Green Jobs" Legislation

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY August 26, 2020

| ISSUE: **CLIMATE CHANGE, ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, TRANSIT SYSTEMS, JOB CREATION**



ALBANY, NY – One year after New York State enacted monumental climate change legislation, a pair of state legislators are pushing their proposal to reduce carbon emissions in the transportation sector and promote the creation of new, good, climate-friendly jobs. The proposal, known as “Green Transit, Green Jobs” includes two bills. One bill requires all new transit bus purchases starting in 2029 to be of zero-emission buses (ZEB) and the second

would create contracting incentives for public transit agencies to procure these buses from manufacturers that utilize labor from high-need communities within New York State and create good green jobs. The plan has widespread support among environmental advocates, transit advocates, and labor unions throughout the state.

The value of zero-emission buses in combating climate change is enormous. According to Bloomberg researchers, approximately “270,000 barrels a day of diesel demand will have been displaced by electric buses.”<sup>[i]</sup> The transportation sector alone causes 36% of New York State’s greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>[ii]</sup> Experts estimate that the total greenhouse gas savings of converting all buses at 900,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent,<sup>[iii]</sup> which is the same as removing over 190,000 passenger vehicles (or 2.2 billion miles driven) from New York’s roads for one year.<sup>[iv]</sup>

The “Green Transit” component of the proposal (A9046/S7349) would require public transit systems to purchase only zero-emission buses starting in 2029 and would task the New York State Department of Transportation with facilitating this conversion. NYSDOT would be explicitly tasked with considering ZEB purchasing in the disbursement of their five-year capital plans and would also help coordinate non-MTA transit agencies on purchasing, installation, and sharing of services. The timeline included in the bill mirrors a commitment that the MTA, which is the largest public transit agency in New York, has already made to purchase only electric buses starting in 2029. Other transit agencies, including the Capital District Transportation Authority and Rochester-Genesee Regional Transportation Authority, have already launched pilot initiatives or are planning to do so shortly. Governor Andrew Cuomo echoed similar principles in his 2020 State of the State address, calling for five of the largest upstate and suburban transit systems (CDTA, RGRTA, NFTA – Buffalo, Suffolk County, and Westchester County) to also take steps to shift to zero-emission bus fleets.

There are approximately 8,500 transit buses in New York State, most of which (5,800) are controlled by the MTA. There are at least twelve transit systems across New York State that have a minimum of 25 buses, and many more with fewer than that.[v]

The anticipated cost of developing necessary ZEB infrastructure, including charging stations along routes and retrofitting bus depots in addition to the purchase of new buses, is expected to be large. However, there are already several funding sources that could be used by transit systems to purchase zero-emission buses, including the Volkswagen Settlement, NYSERDA's Truck Voucher Incentive Program, and various federal initiatives from the Federal Transit Administration and Environmental Protection Agency.

Additionally, experts anticipate that a conversion to ZEB fleets would result in healthcare savings from reduced incidents of asthma and other environmentally-related ailments as well as lower operating costs over the useful life of each bus. The New York City Department of Health estimates that asthma-related hospitalization rates were four times higher for children in low-income zip codes than from high-income zip codes.[vi] Experts estimate that improved health from switching entirely to electric buses result in savings of approximately \$150,000 per bus or \$100 per New York City resident.

The "Green Jobs" component of the proposal (A10559/S8548) would require public transit systems to include a best-value contracting framework in their evaluation of procurement contract proposals for the purchase of zero-emission buses and charging equipment. This framework would incentivize contracts to include elements such as an employment plan (e.g. worker wages, benefits, and jobs for underrepresented individuals), consideration of the surrounding community where a facility would be built, and climate change impact mitigation. The New York State Department of Transportation would be tasked with promulgating regulations to formalize the process for meeting the proposed requirement. There is also a quarterly reporting requirement in the first year and annual reporting for all

subsequent years.

Similar frameworks have been used in places like Los Angeles and Chicago, resulting in the development of new employment centers that created hundreds of high-quality, unionized jobs. Contracting commitments included elements such as hiring 40% of a factory workforce from traditionally under-represented groups in manufacturing (Los Angeles) and the development of an apprenticeship program that prioritizes low-income workers, people of color, women, returning citizens, and veterans (Chicago).

**Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz (D - Bronx) said:** “It’s time we move beyond the outdated and flawed presumption that we have to choose between helping the climate and supporting our economy. With the Green Transit, Green Jobs proposal, New York State can demonstrate to the entire nation that investing in sustainable infrastructure is not only good for our climate but is good for workers and communities too. The wheels of progress move slowly, but it is imperative that we continue taking tangible steps towards the climate goals we established in 2019.”

“This legislative package not only underscores New York's commitment to developing innovative approaches that advance our state’s progressive agenda, but it also demonstrates our dedication to creating sustainable, high quality transportation networks and a greener, more environmentally-just New York,” said **Senator Tim Kennedy, Chair of the Senate Transportation Committee**. “Together, we have an opportunity to build upon the historic Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, and invest in our economy and our future long-term.”

**Lauren Bailey, Director of Climate Policy at Tri-State Transportation Campaign** said: “As we begin planning how to rebuild our economy following the COVID-19 pandemic, our elected leaders must first ensure that an equitable, pro-environment transportation framework is in place.

The Green Transit, Green Jobs bill package is an excellent starting point for New York State to lead in the fight against climate change with the transition to zero-emission public bus fleets, while also fueling the state's economy by creating good, green jobs."

"As New Yorkers recover from the deadly coronavirus pandemic and stare down climate change, we need new ways of harnessing the power of our public dollars to invest in good jobs and healthy communities," said **Miranda Nelson, New York Director of Jobs to Move America**. "The Green Transit, Green Jobs bill does just that, and we applaud the New York Legislature for taking this huge step toward building a clean transportation sector that creates good, family-sustaining jobs for workers in communities that need them most. This bill includes a groundbreaking good jobs and equity policy that will change the way New York State invests our public dollars to create the most public good. The bill will make sure that every single public dollar our state spends on an environmentally just transition to clean transit also supports good jobs for workers facing barriers to employment, lifts labor standards, and builds a fair economy that works for working families."

**Renae Reynolds, Transportation Planner at New York City Environmental Justice Alliance** said: "We are currently facing the most unprecedented time in recent history. As a city, state, nation and members of the global citizenry we must do all we can to combat the raging coronavirus pandemic, a dual crisis which has greatly amplified the preexisting climate and environmental justice inequities. We are encouraged by the leadership shown with the introduction of the Green Transit, Green Jobs bills A9046 and A10559, a critical step in cleaning up our transportation sector. We must remain steadfast and bold in advancing policies that will improve the health and wellbeing of our most vulnerable communities. By reducing emissions in the transportation sector we will begin to reduce climate risks in our environmental justice communities, while also working to reduce the dual impacts of air pollution and the coronavirus."

**Rachel Patterson, Legislative and Climate Associate, Environmental Advocates NY** said: “Meeting the goals set last year by the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act will require significant changes to all sectors of the economy. With transportation as the biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the state, we must take steps to electrify our public transportation systems. The Green Transit, Greens Jobs bills do just that by addressing the need to update public transportation systems across the state, while ensuring that jobs are localized so that communities benefit from the cleaner air and good paying jobs.”

**Dennis Trainor, Vice President, Communications Workers of America, District 1** said: “More than ever, we need a plan to build healthy communities and create good jobs. The Green Transit, Green Jobs act does just that--by electrifying all public transit in New York and making sure that every dollar our state invests in transit electrification supports the creation of thousands of good jobs and training pathways for people who face barriers to employment. Now is the time for New York State to use the power of our public dollars to invest in a fair, climate-safe economy.”

**Allison Considine, Sierra Club New York Campaign Representative** said: “There is no room for fossil fuel buses in a future where climate justice and transit equity are priorities. The ‘Green Transit, Green Jobs’ bills offer the kind of reimagining of our state’s transit systems that we need as New York recovers from the COVID-19 crisis and builds for the future. This is a policy that will put New Yorkers back to work and result in cleaner air and improved health and well-being for our communities.”

**Kathy Harris, Clean Vehicles and Fuels Advocate at National Resource Defence Council** said: “Cleaning up the transportation sector would deliver a cascade of benefits to New Yorkers, especially communities of color and those who rely on public transit. Putting more zero-emissions buses on the road would mean less climate pollution, better air quality, and healthier neighborhoods. This pair of bills sets New York up to make tangible progress

toward its nation-leading climate goals while putting more workers in good-paying, union jobs. It's high time for New York to get moving – and this package of bills will help us get going in the right direction.”

**Alok Disa, Senior Research and Policy Analyst at Earthjustice** said: “We applaud the New York Legislature for taking this tremendous step forward. To meet climate goals and protect the health of its citizens, New York must accelerate the transition to zero-emissions vehicles across all transportation sectors. This legislation will dramatically reduce emissions and improve air quality, while ensuring that the clean energy economy creates good jobs that benefit local communities.”

**Justin Wood, Director of Organizing and Strategic Research at New York Lawyers for Public Interest** said: “Last year, New York enacted the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA), requiring that all state agencies meet greenhouse gas and pollution reduction targets while investing in historically disadvantaged communities. The Green Transit, Green Jobs bills would put this mandate into action, ensuring that our transit systems reduce emissions while creating high-quality green jobs in the communities most impacted by air pollution and the unemployment crisis.”

**Maritza Silva-Farrell, Executive Director at ALIGN** said: “Across New York State, the highest rates of job loss and death from COVID-19 are in low-income communities and communities of color. These are the same communities living on the frontlines of climate change. The Green Transit, Green Jobs bill includes groundbreaking policy that will change the way New York State invests our public dollars to create the most public good. This bill will move us towards an environmentally just transition to clean transit while also supporting good jobs.”

**Jim W White, Jr., Director of Strategic Campaigns at International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation** said: “SMART endorses the Green Transit, Green Jobs Bills, A9046/A10559. Because we as taxpayers deserve to live in a society that believes in Green

Jobs, that pay family sustaining wages and benefits with our tax dollars. SMART represents over 800 members who build electric buses in Lancaster, CA. SMART members appreciate that not only are they covered by a Collective Bargaining Agreement that guarantees them family sustaining wages and benefits and good working conditions, but that they are saving the planet at the same time. These good green jobs can be created in New York too.”

**Michelle Robinson, Director of Clean Transportation at Union of Concerned Scientists** said: “We need to build a clean, modern transportation system that gives everyone affordable, less polluting ways to get around. These two bills commit New York to shift to electric buses, which is a significant step forward. Electric buses will cut both global warming emissions and unhealthy air pollution, making the state’s communities better places to live. These bills will help build the transportation system of the future and provide good jobs in the process.”

The video from this morning's press conference [can be viewed here](#).