



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael Gianaris

## Senate Deputy Leader Gianaris, Assembly Member Mamdani Celebrate #FixTheMTA Wins In State Budget

MICHAEL GIANARIS May 5, 2023

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ASTORIA, N.Y. – Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris and Assembly Member Zohran Mamdani celebrated hard-fought victories in the state budget for transit riders. Surrounded by advocates and neighbors in Astoria's Athens Square Park, the lawmakers highlighted how the budget includes major elements of their #FixTheMTA legislation including a 5-route free bus pilot program and more frequent subway service. The budget also addressed serious fiscal issues facing the transit agency.

“We have taken the MTA off the express track towards fiscal calamity and are delivering a better system for riders,” said **Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris**. “Free bus routes are exactly the type of innovation we need to revolutionize our approach to mass transit and get more people back in the system. I appreciate the partnership of Assembly Member Mamdani and the many advocates who stood up for these important and needed changes.”

**Assembly Member Zohran K. Mamdani** said, “Since December, more than 4000 New Yorkers have taken action to fight for public transit that is excellent, safe, and universally accessible. They canvassed their local subway and bus stops, reached out to their representatives, and rallied from Astoria to Albany. Their work laid the foundation of our campaign to Fix The MTA and together, as straphangers, organizations, and legislators, we have won important victories that will make a real material difference in the lives of working-class New Yorkers,” said Assembly Member Zohran Mamdani. “We averted the MTA’s fiscal cliff, reduced the proposed fare hike, and won \$35 million in historic funding for increased subway service on nights and weekends. In a time of skyrocketing inflation, we’ve achieved a first-of-its-kind free bus pilot across New York City.”

**Senator Kristen Gonzalez** said “With costs continuing to skyrocket, and New Yorkers struggling to make ends meet, free buses will directly impact the wallets of the New Yorkers who need it most. It is a testament to the hard work of the #FixTheMTA campaign that we were able to win free buses in this year’s budget. I look forward to building on this momentum by continuing to fight for an MTA that is accessible, affordable, and reliable.”

**Senator John Liu** said, “Transportation is an essential public good, and its accessibility and operations are among the core responsibilities of government. Free buses will improve service quality, timeliness, and help keep money in the pockets of New Yorkers so they can travel when and where they need to go. Major metropolitan areas like Washington D.C. have already made this transition to free bus routes, and it is important for New Yorkers to approach this pilot not just as a one-time tentative experiment, but as the next big step to modernizing and improving our city.”

**Assembly Member Jessica González-Rojas** said, “MTA riders deserve accessible and reliable service, particularly riders who live in communities like those I represent in Queens that have been chronically underserved. I’m so proud that the final state budget includes \$35 million,

specifically for more frequent subway service, and we are funding a free bus pilot program. I will continue the fight we began last year to increase subway frequency city-wide to get all trains to 6-minute service and eventually get us to completely free public transit. I'm grateful to Speaker Heastie for his leadership on this and to Riders Alliance, Transportation Alternatives, and all of the transit advocates for their continued support."

**Assembly Member Alex Bores** said, "Free busses in other cities have had made busses safer, faster, and more popular than ever. More importantly, they've been a lifeline enabling people to get to work, visit family across town, or otherwise experience all their city has to offer. As the largest American city, New York stands to benefit even more from these changes. But New York is also unique, and we need to get this program right. I'm thrilled that this pilot will let us start learning, and eventually improving transit throughout the City.

I applaud the advocates that have fought so hard for this change, which I hope is just a first step."

**Assembly Member Michaelle Solages**, BPHA Caucus Chair said, "Public transportation is the heartbeat of New York, and for marginalized communities, it provides a vital service that keeps them connected to the opportunities and resources they need to thrive. It is a pathway to better jobs, education, healthcare, and a better quality of life. Without affordable and reliable public transportation, these communities would be cut off from the very lifelines that sustain them. The Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic, and Asian Legislative Caucus celebrates the #FixTheMTA budget win and will continue to advocate for enhanced service for all passengers."

**Lisa Daglian, Executive Director, Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC)** said, "This year's budget gives riders millions of reasons to cheer. Thanks to the hard work and advocacy of the Fix the MTA coalition, we've shown what's possible when transit riders, advocates, and elected leaders get onboard together to fight for sustainable funding for a more reliable, affordable, and equitable transit system. Thank you to Senator Gianaris and Assembly Member Mamdani, the Governor, Speaker and Majority Leader, and all of their colleagues and ours, for being true champions of riders—the everyday New Yorkers who depend on transit every day — ensuring that the MTA will be fully funded like the essential service it is for years to come."

**Jaqi Cohen, Director of Climate and Equity Policy at Tri-State Transportation Campaign** said, "Investing in public transit is good for our city and good for our planet. This year's state budget not only keeps the MTA out of the red, but goes on to improve subway and bus service for riders across our city. Thanks to the leadership of Senator Gianaris and Assembly Member Mamdani, this year's budget reflects a clear commitment to tackling the urgent and intertwined issues of climate change and transit equity."

**Eric McClure, Executive Director of StreetsPAC** said, "We're deeply grateful to Senator Gianaris, Assembly Member Mamdani, and all their colleagues in the legislature who made improving transit service a priority in state budget negotiations. More frequent service will mean that the millions of New Yorkers who rely on trains and buses will get where they need to go faster, with improved reliability and safety. We still have much work to do, but this is an undeniable victory for better transit!"

**Jessica Enzmann, Sierra Club Senior Organizer** said, "More frequent MTA subway service on nights and weekends is an amazing win for New Yorkers. We must pull all the levers to slash climate and air pollution from our transportation systems, and expanding public transit service is a key solution. We deserve a reliable public transit system that works for our communities."

**Riders Alliance Policy & Communications Director Danny Pearlstein** said, "The historic transit funding deal at the heart of this year's state budget will meaningfully improve the lives of millions of New Yorkers who depend on subways and buses each day. Riders have been proud to fight alongside transit champions Senator Gianaris and Assembly Member Mamdani to win new revenue, more subway service and faster, more reliable buses. We look forward to savoring these victories in time savings and easier commutes for years to come."

**Sara Lind, Co-Executive Director at OpenPlans** said, "Expanding New York's camera enforcement has the potential to totally change our experience of the streets. Blocked bike lanes, traffic congestion, and slow bus routes are not an inevitable part of living in the city. These things are pervasive in large part because we don't do much to stop them. Consistent

enforcement is the answer to changing behavior, and we're thrilled that this year's budget has New York City moving in the right direction."