



**Subject: Support for Metro-North and NYSDOT Improvements in the FY 2027 Executive Budget**

**To:** The Honorable Members of the Joint Legislative Budget Committee for Transportation

**From:** Peter Mullan, Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail President & CEO

**Date:** February 3, 2026 **Introduction**

Senator Liz Krueger, Senate Finance Chair; Assemblymember Gary Pretlow, Assembly Ways & Means Chair; Senator Jeremy Cooney, Senate Transportation Chair; Assemblymember William Magnarelli, Assembly Transportation Chair; and distinguished members of the legislature, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the FY 2027 Executive Budget.

My name is Peter Mullan. I represent the Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail (HHFT, Inc.), a subsidiary non-profit of Scenic Hudson, Inc. The Fjord Trail is a 7.5-mile 500-acre linear park project in the Route 9D and Metro-North Railroad Hudson Line corridor between Cold Spring and Beacon. The project is being coordinated directly with the NYS Department of Transportation and MTA/Metro-North Railroad to ensure safe, equitable, and convenient access to this transformative park infrastructure project.

As we enter the second year of the 2025–2029 MTA Capital Program and the final year of the current NYSDOT five-year capital plan, this budget is critical for maintaining New York's economic momentum and regional connectivity.

**Support for Metro-North Railroad Modernization & Upgraded Stations**

Metro-North remains a vital engine for the Hudson Valley and New York City economies,

with weekend ridership now exceeding pre-pandemic levels. We strongly support the following FY 2027 priorities:

- **State of Good Repair:** Funding to continue the \$68.4 billion 2025–2029 Capital Plan is essential for "nuts and bolts" infrastructure, including power systems, signals, and structures that ensure 99% on-time performance. HHFT also endorses additional funding to leverage substantial private investment in projects like Fjord Trail's proposed complete upgrade of the Breakneck Ridge Station on the Hudson Line, which will transform user experience and boost weekend and holiday ridership for the tens of thousands of hikers who use the train to access the Hudson Highlands State Park Preserve each year.
- **Hudson Valley Service Improvements:** The budget includes \$25 million for planning and design to reduce commute times by up to 15 minutes for certain Hudson Valley trips. HHFT applauds this goal and encourages an increase in funding to support a more robust Hudson Line schedule. The MNR Hudson Line is not only a lifeline for dozens of commuter-focused river towns from Yonkers to Poughkeepsie, it is also a convenient and cost-effective way for New Yorkers residing in urban centers like New York City and Albany to enjoy the open space and critical recreational destinations of the Hudson Valley that are only a train ride away.
- **Accessibility & Resilience:** Continued investment in accessibility features like elevator installations, and climate resilience projects is necessary to modernize aging stations and protect the network from extreme weather. As an accessible linear park adjacent to the Hudson Line railway, HHFT strongly encourages increased investment in both accessibility at stations and climate resilience improvements.

## Support for New York State DOT Infrastructure

Reliable roads and bridges are fundamental to the safety of all New Yorkers and the movement of a trillion dollars in annual goods. HHFT urges support for:

- **Bridge and Highway Renewal:** The FY 2027 budget continues the state's record commitment to its \$34.3 billion capital plan, which has already rehabilitated thousands of bridges and lane miles statewide.
- **Local Infrastructure Support:** We support the continued allocation of \$1.4 billion for local roads and bridges, including critical funding for the **Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS)** and the **Pave Our Potholes** initiative. The NYS Route 9D two-lane highway is an ideal candidate for continued improvement. As a key north-south artery through Putnam and Dutchess Counties, it serves weekday commuters and weekend day-trippers, as well as a great number of pedestrians and cyclists visiting the numerous trailheads located alongside 9D in Hudson Highlands State Park Preserve. This confluence of use demands considered attention to ensure motorists, pedestrians and cyclists have adequate space and traffic management amenities to keep everyone safe and moving efficiently through the Route 9D corridor.
- **Safety and Purchasing Power:** Restoring the \$800 million in purchasing power for DOT projects is vital to counteract rising construction costs and ensure major regional projects stay on schedule.

## Leveraging private investment to improve a major transit corridor

As a public-private partnership project being implemented in collaboration with DOT, MTA, and OPRHP, the Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail has concluded its SEQR process and is shovel-ready. The positive benefits of this project for New Yorkers from New York City to Albany and beyond will be transformative. The Fjord Trail will deliver:

- safe and welcoming access to one of the northeast's most popular day-hiking destinations,

- unique connectivity to State parkland by public transit via three Metro-North railroad stations,
- ongoing ecological repair, resilience measures, and stewardship of a riverside transit corridor, and
- critical and long overdue infrastructure improvements including designated off-road parking, public restrooms, an upgraded, modern and accessible MNR train station at Breakneck Ridge, and a 7.5-mile shared use main trail that meets or exceeds accessibility standards and gets pedestrians and cyclists safely off a very congested section of Route 9D.

Projects like this meet New York's vision for public open space, connected by convenient public transportation, that invites people of all ages and abilities to reap the physical and mental benefits of being in nature.

### **Call to Action**

A fully funded transportation budget is not just an investment in infrastructure; it is an investment in New York's workforce, equitable access to recreation, and our future. HHFT urges the Committee to authorize the requested capital contributions to ensure our public transit and road networks remain safe, efficient, and reliable.

Thank you for your time and dedication to preserving New York's irreplaceable outdoor spaces.