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Caution Drivers - Rough Road Ahead

On Saturday, Governor Andrew Cuomo and NYC Mayor Bill de Blasio announced they had reached an agreement to jointly subsidize the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's (MTA) nearly \$11 billion funding gap in its over \$26 billion 2015-19 five-year capital program. While the state hasn't yet disclosed where it will come up with its commitment of \$8.3 billion, we certainly support this very necessary investment in downstate transit. We hope that the Governor will show the same depth of leadership while developing and funding New York's highway and bridge five-year capital program.

In the recent MTA agreement press release, Governor Cuomo said, "The MTA is the lifeblood of New York, helping millions of people travel throughout the city and surrounding suburbs." We agree, nearly half of the commuters in the twelve counties that have MTA service use public transit to travel to work. But it is important to note that almost forty percent still commute by car. In the state's other fifty counties without MTA service, commuters are much more dependent on their cars with over 95 percent using them to get to work.

Parity

In the early 1990's, then-Governor Mario Cuomo and the Legislature created the Dedicated Highway and Bridge Trust Fund (DHBTF) to pay for the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) capital program and the Dedicated Mass Transit Trust Fund (DMTTF) to assist with the MTA and other transit system capital programs.

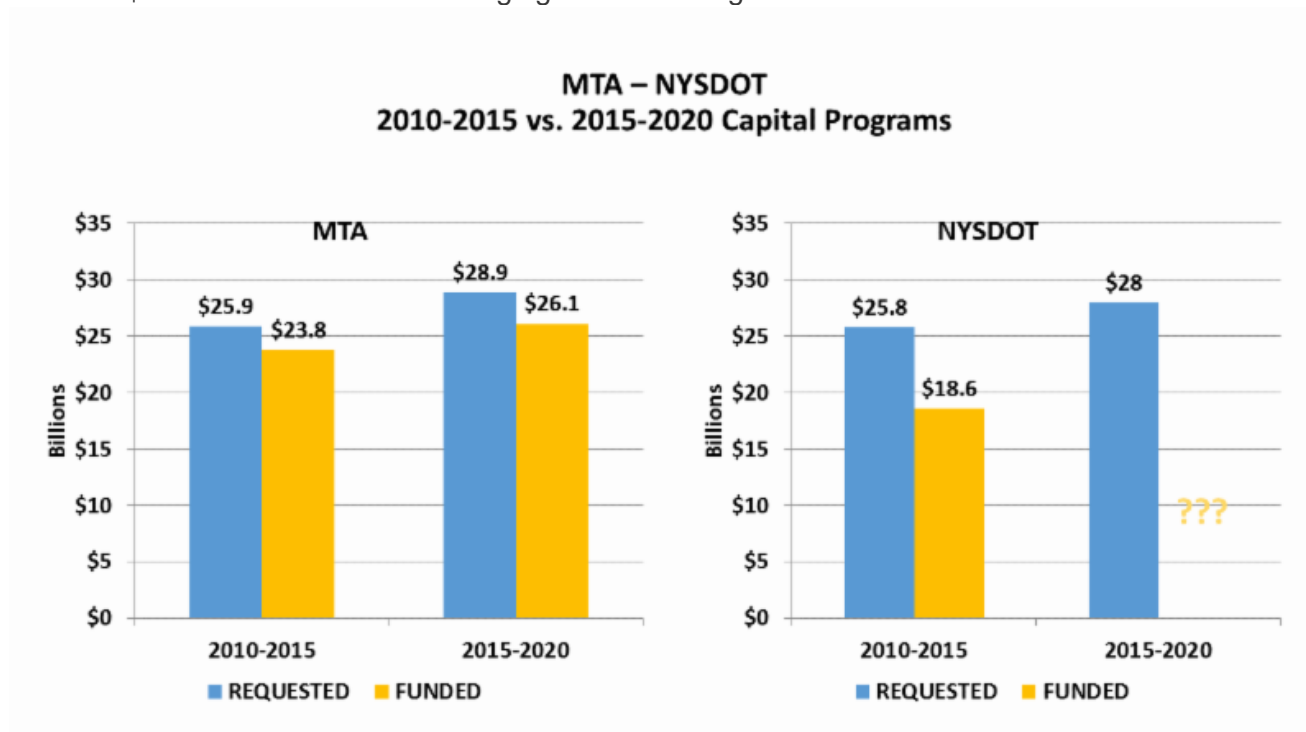
At that time, drivers statewide were asked to have a portion of their gas taxes and auto fees directed toward the DMTTF. Today, New York's drivers pay hundreds of millions of dollars annually to mass transit, about 90 percent of which goes to the MTA.

In return for drivers' financial assistance to transit it was originally agreed that the DOT and MTA's five-year capital programs would be similar in size (parity) and would be negotiated simultaneously.

For nearly two decades through 2009, the parity agreement was honored and both five-year capital programs were similar in size as well as adopted within a month of each other.

In 2010, parity between the MTA and DOT was broken. The MTA received a \$23.8 billion five-year

capital program from 2010-15. The DOT's five-year program was never fully funded and the agency only received \$18.6 billion to maintain its aging and crumbling infrastructure.



Time to release the NYSDOT 2016-20 Five-Year Capital Program

On April 28, 2014, the Governor and legislative leaders signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that called for NYSDOT to submit a five-year capital program for the state highway and bridge program and other transportation modes for SFY 2015-16 through SFY 2019-20.

Over a year ago the MTA released a proposed \$32 billion five-year capital program followed by public hearings and talks among city and state officials to prioritize the capital needs. This initial proposal and information from the hearings formed the basis of the agreement announced over the weekend by the Governor and Mayor.

Historically the NYSDOT has submitted its five-year capital program needs around the same time as the MTA. In the fall of 2009 NYSDOT revealed its last five-year capital needs request of over \$25 billion. Today it is believed that the NYSDOT's needs will top \$28 billion. If that number is accurate the NYSDOT will have an estimated \$10 billion funding gap, very similar in size to the MTA's funding gap that was just subsidized.

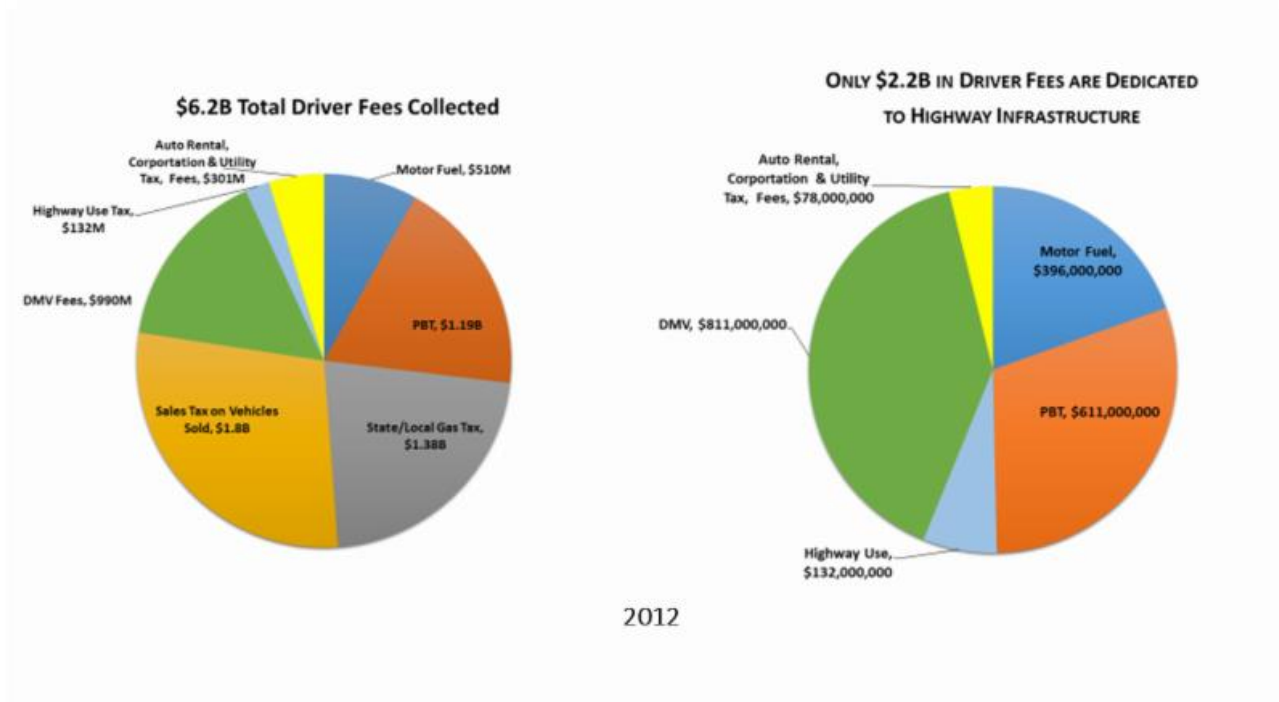
It has been over a year and half since the MOU was signed - it is time for the NYSDOT five-year needs request to be released and a state commitment made to fully fund it!

Use Current Driver Fees/Taxes to Cover NYSDOT's Funding Gap

New York's 11 million drivers pay some of the highest gas/automobile taxes and fees in the United States. The fees and taxes paid by drivers exceed over \$6 billion annually yet only about a third of these revenues are dedicated to maintaining our transportation infrastructure.

This leaves nearly \$4 billion annually in driver fees and taxes being diverted from their intended use of maintaining New York's roads and bridges.

The Governor and Mayor announced in their MTA agreement that they would no longer allow MTA funds to be redirected to non-mass transit purposes. We urge that similar language be enacted to ensure all driver fees and taxes be used solely for maintaining highway and bridge infrastructure.



Numerous reports by Comptroller Tom DiNapoli, NYSDOT and independent organizations show a large number of the state's road mileage is deteriorating and many bridges in the state are rated structurally deficient and functionally obsolete. Thirty-two percent (32%) of our bridges are deficient and 40% of road pavements are rated fair or poor and getting worse. The Comptroller estimates that there will be \$89 billion in unmet infrastructure needs over the next 20 years on just the local system. ***Our state public officials cannot afford to wait any longer to fund our highway and bridge infrastructure.***

The MTA is getting the state financial assistance it says it needs; it's time to restore parity between the MTA and the NYSDOT to begin to address the critical state and local needs of our highways and bridges. An additional \$10 billion for NYSDOT over the next 5 years would seem fair.

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Mr. Griswold is President of the New York State Association of Town Superintendents of Highways (NYSAOTSOH) and Highway Superintendent for the Town of Preble. Mr. O'Brien is the President of the New York State County Highway Superintendents Association (NYSCHSA) and Commissioner of the Niagara County Department of Public Works. The membership of their collective organizations is responsible for ensuring the safe operation of 87 percent of the state's roads and half of its bridges.

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