

Environmental Advocates of NY
Jobs to Move America
New York Lawyers for the Public Interest
New York League of Conservation Voters
NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign
Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC)
Regional Plan Association
Reinvent Albany
Riders Alliance
Transportation Alternatives
Tri-State Transportation Campaign

Members of the MTA Board

March 23, 2020

Re: Unprecedented COVID-19 Emergency Requires Increased MTA Data Sharing

Dear Members of the MTA Board of Directors,

Transit, environmental and other advocates strongly support the MTA's request for at least \$4B in initial federal emergency funds. Last week, we sent our U.S. senators and congressional representatives letters¹ urging them to bring home this funding for the MTA.

To help us make the case for this, and future emergency aid, we ask you and MTA management to publicly release complete and timely information about the MTA's ridership and finances.

Given the enormity of this crisis, we believe it is very possible the MTA may need even more federal rescue funds. We note that the American Public Transportation Association is calling for \$16B² to support for public transit systems nationwide given losses and the cost of emergency response; the MTA's share (given it having 38% of national ridership³) of this funding would be \$6B.

¹ See joint letters here:

<https://reinventalbany.org/2020/03/mta-must-be-saved-by-at-least-4b-in-federal-rescue-funds/> and here <https://jobstomoveamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/MTA-Financial-Aid-Request-Support.pdf>

² See American Public Transportation Association (APTA) Letter to Congressional Leaders, March 19, 2020.

<https://images.magnetmail.net/images/clients/APTA/attach/APTALTRtoCongressionalLeadersonCOVID1903192020.pdf>

³ Data from APTA's Public Transportation Fact Book and related data sheets,

<https://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/2020-APTA-Fact-Book-Appendix-B.xlsx>

Advocates and our elected representatives will best be able to support the MTA's funding requests if it provides timely and complete information, including financial projections showing multiple possibilities, including best, medium and worst-case scenarios. Information should be released in an open data format like the MTA's existing datasets about turnstile usage and daily traffic on bridges and tunnels⁴, and use dashboards, if possible, to allow the public to easily visualize the following information about ridership and finances:

- Daily and weekly ridership numbers across all MTA transit systems, including paratransit, noting decline from past year figures
- Daily and weekly driver numbers across all MTA bridges and tunnels, noting decline from past year figures⁵
- Current and projected revenue from ridership dropoff, as well as projected losses from the farebox across all MTA systems
- Current and projected losses from toll revenue across MTA bridges and tunnels
- Current and projected losses to MTA dedicated taxes
- Current and projected costs to MTA for COVID-19 related cleaning and other emergency response initiatives, including overtime

Release of timely, complete and open ridership and financial information will be crucial to efforts to gain federal funding commensurate with the MTA's needs to bring the agency out of this crisis, as there will be many requests for federal aid.

We all agree that without a fully functioning MTA, there will be no recovery in the New York City region or for New York State. Public transit is the lifeblood of our City and the surrounding counties and states; it powers the economy and enables the region's growth and success. Affordable, reliable transit is also essential to lifting up the most vulnerable New Yorkers who use it to access jobs, education, and other opportunities.

Given the historic revenue losses caused by this crisis, we ask you as fiduciaries of the MTA to ensure that additional financial information is released to all stakeholders. We are here to help fight for additional federal funding to save the MTA.

Sincerely,

⁴ Available at:

https://data.ny.gov/browse?Dataset-Information_Agency=Metropolitan+Transportation+Authority

⁵ As noted previously, this is currently released on the state open data portal, but could be made more accessible.

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Cc. Bob Foran, MTA CFO
State Comptroller Tom DiNapoli
City Comptroller Scott Stringer
Members of the NYS Legislature
Members of the City Council
Members of the NY Congressional Delegation