June 29, 2020

United States Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer

United States House Democratic Caucus Chair Hakeem Jeffries

Dear Senator Schumer and Representative Jeffries,

We write at the edge of an abyss. New York’s public transit system, which in better times moved nine million people daily and even now moves more than two million, will run out of money next month. We implore you as our most powerful champions in the nation’s capital to deliver the financial support essential to keep buses, subways, trains, and paratransit running.

The New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority’s outstanding COVID-related losses in fares, tolls, and taxes total $10.3 billion through next year. The critical $3.9 billion you provided in the CARES Act has kept service operating from March until now. But with over 73% of CARES funds already drawn down, the MTA will run out entirely in July, requiring more cash immediately.

After a devastating spring when New York became the global pandemic epicenter, our city has only just begun to recover from COVID. Meanwhile, we look anxiously at surging infection rates nationwide and try to prevent an imminent second wave here. The collapse of the public transit system our region depends on would knock us back on our heels at the worst possible moment. New York’s entire recovery would falter. With more than half of essential workers dependent on public transit, our heroic emergency response capability would dissipate.

Our region, the nation’s financial and cultural capital, produces one tenth of America’s economic output. Despite being home to nearly 40% of the nation’s transit riders, we have received an inequitable 15% share of federal transit funds. At a time of greater economic uncertainty than any since the Great Depression, the country cannot afford to lose New York’s productive capacity. No other region depends on public transit to nearly the extent that we do nor is any as critical to the nation’s overall fiscal health. We strain to think of a better investment in recovery than getting New Yorkers safely back to work.

We urge you to do everything in your significant power to bring more aid to the MTA now. The agency’s need has never been more dire nor its importance greater. Time is quickly running out.

Sincerely,

Betsy Plum
Executive Director
Riders Alliance
McGregor Smyth  
Executive Director  
New York Lawyers for the Public Interest  

Julie Tighe  
President  
New York League of Conservation Voters  

Jaqi Cohen  
Campaign Director  
NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign  

Lisa Daglian  
Executive Director  
Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority  

Thomas K. Wright  
President  
Regional Plan Association  

John Kaehny  
Executive Director  
Reinvent Albany  

Eric McClure  
Executive Director  
StreetsPAC  

Danny Harris  
Executive Director  
Transportation Alternatives  

Nick Sifuentes  
Executive Director  
Tri-State Transportation Campaign