

September 10, 2020

The Honorable Cory Booker
United States Senate
717 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: SUPPORT \$32 Billion for Public Transportation Coronavirus Relief

Dear Senator Booker,

On behalf of the Emergency Campaign to Save Public Transit, a coalition of transit groups in the Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey region, I am writing to thank you for your continued support to provide the nation's largest public transit agencies with a \$32 billion emergency cash infusion. Due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, transit in the New York region is in need of immediate assistance, including \$1.2 billion for New Jersey Transit (NJ Transit), \$12 billion for New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), and \$3 billion for the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey (PANYNJ). Our mission has now taken on greater urgency as the region's transit systems stand on the brink of total collapse.

Together, these three agencies provide services that connect millions of people with jobs, affordable housing, medical appointments, education, and other opportunities throughout the tri-state area. And while important to the ridership population at large, the absence of public transit for certain groups, such as senior citizens and people with disabilities, may very well be life-threatening. Public transit also plays a vital role in the fight against climate change. As you know, an economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic without sufficient funding for public transit is a recipe for disaster--both immediate and long-term. The saving grace for our regional transit systems is your commitment to public transit. At a recent forum sponsored by Tri-State Transit Campaign and partner organizations, we were heartened when you said, "It's not just a New Jersey fight, or a regional fight, this is critical infrastructure for the lifeblood of our nation." We need your leadership now more than ever to save public transit and prevent unimaginable damage to our communities.

The federal government is the only entity that can prevent our public transit systems from collapsing due to financial ruin. Strained by the pandemic and economic recession, the State of New York is currently facing a \$14.5 billion deficit for this year and the State of New Jersey is facing a \$10 billion deficit. Furthermore, traditional funding streams for transit--revenue from fare collection, sales taxes, and tolls--have essentially evaporated, creating an unprecedented crisis.

At a board meeting last week, the MTA warned that without federal aid, the agency will have to cut New York City's subway and bus service by forty percent and the region's commuter rail service by fifty percent. Service cuts this substantial will deliver a devastating blow to the region's quality of life and fast track the decline of our country's largest city.

Every dollar invested in public transit produces five dollars in [additional GDP](#). Before the pandemic, rising traffic congestion on highways and roads was already costing our region \$20 billion each year in lost economic productivity and contributing to some of the worst air quality in the country, especially in environmental justice communities. Although businesses are reopening, the threat of the virus remains and many people still fear taking public transit. Without immediate action from the federal government, our economic recovery will be a long and treacherous journey.

Your leadership is greatly appreciated, without it the very existence of public transit in our region is imperiled. A member of our coalition will be in touch with your staff soon.

Sincerely,

The Emergency Campaign to Save Public Transit, including:

Nick Sifuentes, Executive Director
Tri-State Transportation Campaign

Betsy Plum, Executive Director
Riders Alliance

Jaqi Cohen, Campaign Director
NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign

Eric McClure, Executive Director
StreetsPAC

Thomas K. Wright
President & CEO
Regional Plan Association

Lisa Daglian
Executive Director
Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC)

McGregor Smyth
Executive Director
New York Lawyers for the Public Interest

John Kaehny
Executive Director
Reinvent Albany