



Good morning. My name is Kate Slevin, Senior Vice President of State Programs and Advocacy at Regional Plan Association. RPA is a non-profit civic organization that conducts research, planning and advocacy to improve economic opportunity, mobility, environmental sustainability and the quality of life for those who live and work in New York and the rest of the New York City metropolitan region. Thank you for allowing me to testify today.

The pandemic and ensuing economic shutdown has dramatically changed travel and commuting patterns around the New York City region. We have lost two million jobs, and a huge number of workers stopped commuting to work from home.

At the beginning of March, roughly two million people worked in the Manhattan Central Business District and nearly all of them were daily commuters. But now, in total, more than one-and-a-half million fewer people are commuting to jobs in the Manhattan CBD or about 25% of the pre-COVID level.

Before COVID- seven times more people took a train, bus, or ferry than those who drove to work in the Manhattan CBD. More people came by public transit than any other mode, regardless of the commuter's origin around New York City. Now, because much of the region's transportation system is built around trying to move commuters in and out of Manhattan, the MTA has suffering massive ridership decreases and is hemorrhaging money.

As the economy has reopened, people needing to commute into Manhattan have been faster to return to driving or biking than taking a train or bus, and the roads are now nearly as congested and slow as they were prior to the pandemic. This is an untenable trend as there will soon be no additional space for cars on the roads without overloading the system. We must have safe, reliable, and modern mass transit to reverse this trend. Adding more cars on the road will also add pollution and accidents to many of our communities that have already greatly suffered.

We must use this opportunity to continue to push for more comprehensive solutions to our roads to ensure more people can travel on them safely and efficiently, while also allowing for better bus service. More dedicated lanes and faster, easier modes of payment will support the MTA and the many essential workers who rely on bus service to get to work.

After ridership on mass transit hit rock-bottom in April, RPA released a report called Essential Service that examined some of the ways agencies can save money. All of them would be incredibly difficult and painful. The MTA could raise fares, which could possibly go as high as \$9 per subway ride, with additional increases on the commuter rail lines. It could cut service, which

would be incredibly hard on many essential workers who rely on the systems. Add crushing additional debt to the agency, or cut its recently approved capital program, which would delay the essential improvements to the system that have been needed for decades, while also damaging the prospects for our region's economic recovery from our current recession. That is we must continue to focus energy on ensuring additional federal support that is directed specifically to the MTA.

Thank you to the state legislature for convening this meeting, and your time today. I ask that you remain supportive and vigilant over the coming fall and winter to assist the MTA as they face this incredibly daunting and unprecedented challenge.