



**Testimony of Transportation Alternatives  
Before the New York State Assembly Ways and Means Committee and  
Senate Finance Committee, January 24, 2024**

Good afternoon Chairs Krueger, Weinstein, Kennedy, and Magnarelli and committee members. Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Elizabeth Adams, and I am the Deputy Executive Director for Public Affairs at Transportation Alternatives. For 50 years, Transportation Alternatives has been a leader in the fight to make our streets safer and livable for all New Yorkers.

**Congestion Pricing is Essential to New York's Economy**

Transportation Alternatives is proud to support congestion pricing, which will raise \$15 billion for public transportation, shifting New York to cleaner, greener and faster transportation and reducing congestion and air pollution.

It is critical that no new exemptions or credits be added to the congestion pricing program beyond those proposed by the Traffic Mobility Review Board (TMRB) and approved by the MTA. It is most important to launch the program as is, and monitor and modify the program as it continues. Congestion Pricing will reduce the amount of vehicles coming into the central business district, helping to improve safety, speed up buses, reduce traffic pollution, and make space for more bike lanes and pedestrian space. It is important the MTA highlight the public transportation projects that will be funded by congestion pricing and lay out what improvements it will bring for New Yorkers trying to get around our city in safer, more sustainable ways.

TA also supports Part F of TED Article VII in the Governor's Executive budget to give the MTA more tools to combat toll evasion as congestion pricing comes online. Congestion pricing addresses our needs to fund public transportation and reduce congestion – if we give a green light for some people to cheat the program, everyone else will be forced to pay more, and we will not reduce current congestion rates that our climate crisis and overcrowded streets so heavily demand. Automated enforcement has been incredibly effective at addressing reckless speeding in our city, and it is important New York has the tools to ensure program operations work.

**Responding to the Climate Emergency with Sustainable Transportation**

Transportation is the largest source of carbon pollution in the United States, accounting for 33% of all US emissions, and the second largest cause of greenhouse gas in New York. NY's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (Climate Act) requires a 40% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 levels by 2030 and an 85% reduction by 2050.

This summer was the Northern Hemisphere's [hottest summer on record](#), bringing extreme heat, air quality emergencies, flash floods, and more manmade natural disasters. **We cannot solve the climate crisis without explicitly centering transportation and infrastructure in our state's planning and budgeting.**

**In her State of the State, Governor Hochul highlighted transportation as a climate investment and the need to take steps to achieve a zero-emission transportation sector by 2050, with the launch of her Clean Transportation Standard Study.** We call on the NYS Legislature to make the transportation sector a centerpiece of solving our climate emergency. Bold and innovative action now will pay dividends over the coming years and make New York State a prosperous, livable, and sustainable place for all.

The state must invest in climate-ready transportation solutions, including:

- public transportation, walking and biking street improvement infrastructure,
- green infrastructure to address concerns like extreme heat & flooding on the street
- incentives to help New Yorkers transition away from gas-powered cars and trucks to more sustainable modes of transportation, like e-bikes
- prioritizing capital projects that include green transportation components, such as Complete Streets features
- setting an aggressive target to reduce vehicle miles traveled on a timeline that aligns with achieving the State's greenhouse gas emissions reduction mandates

**The state must prioritize investments in areas that are on the frontline of the climate crisis, and center climate justice as part of all projects and opportunities.**

New York State has the chance to be an international leader in addressing the climate emergency, but we need our leaders to act now. The FY25 budget is a prime opportunity to invest in a livable future for New Yorkers.

### **Sammy's Law**

We are pleased that Governor Hochul has included Sammy's Law in her Executive budget proposal, and today, TA calls on the state legislature to include Sammy's Law in both the Senate and Assembly budget bills. Traffic violence costs the New York State economy at least \$15 billion annually in combined costs from hospitalization, emergency response, legal expenses, lost wages, and lost economic activity and \$1.1 billion in hospitalization and emergency costs alone.

Sammy's Law (S2422, Hoylman-Sigal/A7266, Rosenthal) is named for the son of Families for Safe Streets' co-founder Amy Cohen, and will give New York City the power to set speed limits in a way that is tailored to neighborhoods' actual safety needs. The bill gives NYC the power to lower speed limits below 25 mph where necessary and where it makes sense. Changes to a road's speed limit will go through normal City procedures. It also requires a robust public education campaign to inform residents of any speed limit changes before the bill goes into effect.

Last year, Sammy's Law received a message of home rule from the NYC Council, passed in the Senate, and was supported by Governor Hochul, Mayor Adams, and many New York City and State elected leaders.

### **Complete Streets**

Complete Streets funding helps localities across New York to tap into state dollars to make roadway improvements that support road access for all users, whether they walk, bike, drive, or use public transit.

We ask the Senate Finance Committee and the Assembly Ways and Means Committee to fund the Complete Streets appropriation in the Department of Transportation Capital Projects Budget with an additional \$10 million to maintain New York's commitment to improving our communities. This funding could be used to create a DOT grant program, making the funds available to municipalities for Complete Streets implementation projects - standalone complete streets projects or to increase the bike and pedestrian infrastructure component in a broader transportation project.

### **Major DOT capital projects should require a Complete Streets component to move forward.**

Some examples of Complete Streets projects include:

- Streetscape enhancements, like curb extensions or raised intersections, at key intersections in a downtown to help revitalize the local economy
- Corridor enhancements, like buffered bike lanes, to increase bicycle ridership and reduce VMT between a trailhead and a school
- Traffic calming measures, like speed cushions, where speeding is an issue

### **Statewide Vision Zero crash dashboard**

The Executive Budget proposal includes a \$184 million increase in the budget for the DMV, or a 38 percent increase over last year. New York State should give the traffic violence crisis the response it deserves, which includes declaring New York to be a Vision Zero state and setting the goal that no New Yorker should be killed or seriously injured in a traffic crash.

New Yorkers deserve to know where crashes happen in their communities and neighborhoods to better understand the local impact of traffic violence and to prioritize street safety investments where they are most needed. The DMV should create a statewide Vision Zero crash dashboard that will include accessible and public information related to crashes around the state so that governments and residents can make more informed decisions about how to address traffic violence in their communities.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please contact me at [elizabeth.adams@transalt.org](mailto:elizabeth.adams@transalt.org).