



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John C. Liu

## Legislators call on MTA to expand express bus service in Queens

JOHN C. LIU | May 16, 2024

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**Contact:** Soojin Choi | [press@johnliusenate.com](mailto:press@johnliusenate.com) | 347-556-6335

**Queens, NY** – State legislators from Queens are calling on the Metropolitan Transportation Authority to immediately expand express bus service in Queens in order to attract more riders to public transit before congestion pricing takes effect.

Legislators expressed disappointment that the MTA excluded Queens from recent enhancements to express bus routes from Brooklyn and Staten Island to Manhattan. As the countdown to congestion pricing continues, the elected officials note that it is unacceptable to exclude Queens from express bus improvements while simultaneously proposing service reductions for nearly every Queens express bus line as part of the ongoing **Queens Bus Redesign**.

In a letter to MTA Chair Janno Lieber, they called for an immediate expansion to Queens express bus lines before congestion pricing takes effect and for the MTA to reconsider the proposed express bus reductions as part of the Queens Bus Redesign.

A copy of the letter is attached.

**State Senator John Liu, Member of the Senate Transportation Committee,** stated, "Expanded transit options for eastern Queens residents, namely more express buses, was always part of the intent and plan under congestion pricing. The MTA needs to be firing on all cylinders to make sure Queens residents have every available mass transit resource available before congestion pricing is implemented. That means more, not less, express bus service to take commuters into Manhattan. The recently announced 10 percent monthly LIRR discount was a welcome first step, but it's by no means a replacement for express buses. We call on the MTA to shift into high gear to make sure Queens riders get their fair share of expanded express bus service."

**State Senator Leroy Comrie, Chair of the Corporations, Authorities, and Commissions Committee,** stated, "Since 2019 when congestion pricing became a reality, in efforts to help fund the capital needs of the MTA, I have repeatedly stressed the need for improvements to transit service ahead of the spigot being turned on. As Chair of the Corporations, Authorities, and Commissions Committee, during joint budget meetings, hearings that the Committee has held, and at numerous public events, my colleagues and I have repeatedly conveyed the need for more express bus service in our borough. In conversations with MTA leadership, staff, advocates and stakeholders, we have made clear that fundamental changes were necessary for the congestion proposal to work and provide the anticipated funding stream being sought. Unfortunately, it seems that the MTA still has not received the message that Queens commuters expect better and deserve better."

**State Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris** stated, "Queens bus riders deserve to be included in improved reliability and service. I'm deeply disappointed after all of the advocacy, particularly from Queens representatives like myself, that riders here were excluded and will be left with inadequate service as congestion pricing goes into effect."

**State Senator Toby Ann Stavisky** stated, “We are asking our residents in northern and east Queens to pay for congestion pricing without providing the services promised to our community in return. Our residents do not have access to our subway system. We deserve expanded express bus services to provide them with more affordable options for travel.”

**State Assembly Member Ed Braunstein** stated, “Northeast Queens residents rely on the Long Island Rail Road and express bus service for their public transportation needs. While the MTA has made recent strides to make LIRR service more affordable for commuters, the proposed cuts to express bus service are a major concern. In addition to commuters going to and from work, many older adults in my district depend on express bus service to travel to doctor’s appointments. Further, it is unfair and counterproductive to cut public transit service considering the MTA’s impending implementation of congestion pricing. For these reasons, I join my colleagues in calling on the MTA to not only reverse their proposed cuts, but to increase express bus service.”

**State Assembly Member Nily Rozic** stated, "It's imperative that our transit system remain equitable and doesn't disproportionately burden outer-borough commuters. Queens residents deserve accessible and affordable public transit options, including express buses, ensuring inclusion and affordability to alleviate their commutes and expand their transit options."

**State Assembly Member Alicia Hyndman** stated, “Queens is the most diverse borough in NYC and one of the city’s largest transit deserts. Lack of access to public transportation not only harms communities but derails lives. With congestion pricing aggressively approaching, express bus service into Manhattan is more crucial now than ever. We must be prepared for the pending impact of more express bus riders post June 30. Though the current MTA bus network has recent wins, transportation wins to one borough and not all boroughs; is a loss. It is unacceptable for Queens residents to be excluded from express bus improvements. I

encourage the MTA to do more for our residents and expand service regardless of proposed cuts."

**State Assembly Member Jessica González-Rojas** stated, "With most of my neighbors in Western Queens relying on public transportation, expanded express bus services will improve the quality of life and increase street safety. Further, as we are gearing up for congestion pricing to start, it's important the rest of New York City's infrastructure support this critical improvement. Congestion pricing will only work when our public transportation works well and residents have ample options to get to their destinations quickly and safely. The MTA needs to expand express bus service now."

**State Senator Julia Salazar** stated, "Now is the time to expand express bus service in Queens, not cut it. With the imminent onset of long-awaited congestion pricing and in the absence of readily accessible subway lines, express buses will become even more important to workers, students, seniors, and many others. The MTA has the opportunity to make the right choice, and we call on them to do so on behalf of our communities."

**State Senator James Sanders Jr.** stated, "The MTA's neglect of Queens in its express bus service enhancements are unacceptable as we approach congestion pricing. This blatant disregard for equitable service expansion leaves Queens commuters with limited public transit options and disproportionately burdens them with the impending costs of congestion pricing. We demand the MTA immediately prioritize Queens and reconsider any proposed service reductions to ensure all New Yorkers have viable transportation alternatives."