



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

Senators Kennedy and Comrie Host Joint Public Hearing on Impact of COVID-19 on the MTA and New York's Transportation Networks

SENATOR TIM KENNEDY August 26, 2020

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Joint Public Hearing: Impact of COVID-19 on the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and Public Transportation

ALBANY, N.Y. – The New York State Senate and Assembly held a joint hearing yesterday to examine the effects of COVID-19 on the MTA's infrastructure, employees, and ridership, and discuss potential policy changes to prepare the system for future pandemics. The hearing also explored the MTA's emergency response and modifications in response to COVID-19 and their effectiveness, as well as distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE), safety

protocols, and employee training. MTA leadership, including Chairman Pat Foye and NYC Transit President Sarah Feinberg, participated in the hearing, as well as the leadership of several unions representing MTA workers, including but not limited to Transport Workers Unions, Sheet Metal Air, Rail, and Transportation Union, Amalgamated Transit Union, Associated General Contractors of New York State, and the Association of Commuter Rail Employees.

Throughout the hearing, unions representing transportation workers repeatedly raised concerns about worker wellness and exposure to COVID-19, and underscored the need for better PPE protocols, increased testing for essential employees, and strong investment in the workforce that continues to risk their lives to deliver vital transit services. Additionally, they implored the MTA to restore services to full operating capacity in order to maintain social distancing, and pleaded with the Authority to ensure essential items like hand sanitizer is available to all employees and ridership.

Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins said, "This was another important hearing in response to the COVID-19 pandemic by the Legislature. Ensuring the safety of MTA and transportation workers and riders is crucial to our efforts to reopen our communities and businesses safely. I thank my colleagues, Senators Tim Kennedy and Leroy Comrie, for co-chairing today's hearing and those who testified to help us move New York State forward."

"New Yorkers deserve access to a safe and efficient transit system, and we know that the only way we can achieve this is if we continue to examine the response of the MTA and explore the effectiveness of its policies and procedures as this pandemic continues," said **Senator Tim Kennedy, Chair of the Senate Transportation Committee**. "This hearing only further demonstrates the critical need for an immediate federal investment in our essential transit systems; the lives and long-term safety of our workers and ridership depend upon it."

"COVID-19 has presented challenges to the MTA that are unprecedented," said **Senator Leroy Comrie**. "It is more important now than ever that we collaboratively keep a watchful eye on the MTA and engage with authority leadership, labor, advocates, and experts often. Federal investment is absolutely necessary, and we must continue to push for solutions that will attract ridership back to trains and buses, protect transit workers, and sustain the MTA during our recovery. I want to thank Leader Stewart-Cousins and Speaker Heastie as well as my colleagues Chairs Kennedy and Paulin for being steadfast partners in our effort to conduct this critical oversight."

In order to prioritize public safety, the hearing was held virtually on nysenate.gov.

Submitted written testimony [can be viewed here](#).