



NEW YORK STATE SENATE

ALBANY, NY 12247

ALESSANDRA R. BIAGGI
SENATOR

December 9, 2020

Patrick J. Foye
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
Metropolitan Transit Authority
2 Broadway
New York, NY, 10004

Dear Chairman Foye and members of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority Board,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify today. Our public transportation system is at a crossroads and the decisions we make now will determine the future of the MTA and of our city. It is of the utmost importance that the voices of all communities are heard and considered — especially the communities of color and low income communities I represent in the State Senate, who have borne the brunt of the pandemic and could face the greatest impact if the MTA proceeds with proposed fare increases and service cuts.

Although I understand the dire economic circumstances the MTA is facing, and the urgent need to raise revenue, raising fares is not the answer. I strongly oppose any increases in fares, including the proposals to eliminate monthly or 7-day unlimited MetroCards, which will undoubtedly have a disproportionate impact on the essential workers who rely on the subway and bus systems. While many of us have been able to work from home and limit our travel, essential workers remain reliant on public transportation to get to work everyday. At a time when we are already asking them to sacrifice their health and safety to keep our communities functioning, we cannot expect workers to pay increased fares. Several of the MTA's proposals, including increasing express bus and City Zone Metro-North fares, and increasing tolls for E-ZPass users, would also unfairly target essential workers and residents in the Bronx who have to rely on buses, Metro-North, and cars because of limited subway access in their communities.

I also want to be clear, our communities cannot accept proposed cuts to service. Service cuts would have a devastating impact on communities in the Bronx, many of which are already underserved by public transportation. Furthermore, cutting service will only result in increased crowding on trains and buses, putting essential workers at risk and discouraging New Yorkers who have other transit options from utilizing public transportation. Far from increasing ridership and thus revenue, service cuts will make many think twice before using the subway as long as the COVID-19 crisis continues.

Lastly, it is long past time for the MTA to restore 24 hour service. At least 20,000 workers have been impacted by overnight subway closures that are no longer justifiable by the best available information regarding the virus. Although it is possible for the virus to spread when droplets land on surfaces, the CDC's official position is that contaminated surfaces

are not a main source of transmission. Person-to-person transmission is much more common.¹ Transit groups such as the Tri-State Transportation Campaign have argued that interventions like mask wearing and running high-frequency service are much more important to preventing the spread of the virus.² The MTA should follow the science and restore 24-hour service.

As a legislator, I stand ready to vote in support of equitable revenue raisers so we can address New York State's budget deficit and provide much needed support to the MTA. I also join the MTA in calling for significant additional funding from the federal government. However, our bottom line must be clear. We cannot ask New Yorkers, many of whom are facing enormous economic hardship at this time, to pay more until the MTA has exhausted every other available option.

Thank you for your time and attention.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Biaggi', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Alessandra Biaggi
New York State Senator, District 34

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#Spread>

² http://www.tstc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/06162020_-back-on-board.pdf