



March 20, 2024

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor
State of New York
Capital City Hall
Albany, NY 12242

Dear Governor Hochul:

We are writing to request your support for inclusion of \$90 million in additional operating investments to the MTA to improve bus service and expand the fare-free bus pilot in the final Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 State budget. We are encouraged to see that both the New York State Senate and Assembly have included this investment in their respective FY25 budget resolutions, and we hope that you will concur with your Legislative colleagues as to the importance of this investment, particularly as we prepare for Congestion Pricing's imminent implementation.

Last year, thanks to your leadership, New York launched the fare-free bus pilot in each borough to widespread acclaim. This year, we face the long-awaited, and critical, implementation of the Congestion Pricing program. And in this year's budget, we must fulfill the vision of congestion pricing by creating commensurate service improvements that increase public transit ridership for the long-term.

The foundational principle of Congestion Pricing is to reduce congestion, make our streets safer, protect the environment, and encourage the use of mass transit. Implementation of the Central Business District (CBD) Tolling Program only partially fulfills that mandate, and without further investment in our mass transit system we are not fully embracing the opportunity this moment provides.

The fare-free pilot program launched last year has been a tremendous success, increasing ridership on the pilot bus lines [by as much as 20 percent, according to estimates](#). As the MTA works to implement Congestion Pricing and renew focus on our mass transit system, it is of paramount importance that we replicate this success and expand access to mass transit, connecting communities to and within the CBD in particular.

The \$90 million investment will double down and expand on the success of the initial pilot program through the following investments:

- **\$45 million to expand the fare-free bus pilot**, bringing three new fare-free routes to each borough. As the cost of living remains exorbitant and driving becomes more expensive, we must make it cheaper to take public transit. The benefits of free buses are manifold: speeding up travel times, connecting divided communities, improving safety, increasing access to essential services; and more.
- **\$45 million to increase bus frequency and reliability**. Funds to increase frequency and reliability will provide dedicated attention to improving these metrics. They will also support improving express and feeder routes, which are critical to making congestion pricing a success: we must offer an effective way to move people into the Central Business District on public transit. Such investments were at the core of London's successful congestion pricing implementation decades ago; [the city increased bus service by 17 percent](#) before it implemented congestion pricing. New York must now follow suit.

Congestion pricing will bring crucial revenue to MTA capital needs, transform NYC's public transit system, make our streets safer and our environment cleaner – but we must work to alleviate the burdens it may place on the working-class communities we represent. As budget negotiations progress, we urge you to make this critical investment a priority.

Sincerely,



Dan Goldman
Member of Congress



Antonio Reynoso
Brooklyn Borough President



Mark Levine
Manhattan Borough President