



NEWS RELEASE

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Groups to Legislature: Transit Alarm Bells are Ringing

(ALBANY, NY) – Amidst ever growing deficits facing the New York region’s transit system, a broad coalition of civic, business, labor and environmental groups descended on Albany today to raise concerns over major shortfalls in transit funding.

The Empire State Transportation Alliance – including the Regional Plan Association, NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign, General Contractors Association of New York, Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA, New York Building Congress, Natural Resources Defense Counsel, Transport Workers Union Local 100 and Tri-State Transportation Campaign – met with key members and staffers and testified at the Transportation Budget hearing. The coalition also released a strongly worded letter to state leaders warning of transit’s dire financial condition,

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority is projecting huge deficits – a \$400 million shortfall in operations for 2010 and at least \$10 billion shy for its next five-year rebuilding program. At the same time, the MTA is proposing elimination of student transit passes and widespread service cuts including the elimination of several bus and subway lines and Paratransit services for the disabled. The MTA is conducting public hearings starting in March and service reductions are slated to being mid-year.

Members of the campaign are urging the state to restore a disproportionately large \$143 million cut to transit in the 2009 Deficit Reduction Plan. Additionally the groups called on the legislature to embrace a full five year capital program, make good on funding student transit passes and explore longer term solutions for funding such as congestion management tactics.

“Transit is facing major shortfalls, growing worse by the day as promised revenue streams fall short,” said Kevin S. Corbett, co-chair of the Empire State Transportation Alliance. “The first step is the state and city making good on their commitments and obligations to fund our vital transportation network.”

“The State’s economy is never going to recover and expand if the MTA’s capital program is allowed to languish,” said Denise Richardson, managing director of the General Contractor’s

Association of New York. “The MTA capital program is an investment in the long term health of the metropolitan region’s economy. If we want New York to retain its place as an economic powerhouse, then we will fund our mass transit system. If we want New York to decline and lose jobs and population to other states, we will let the MTA system fall into a state of disrepair. The choice is ours to make.”

“The state needs to make good on its commitment last year to stave off drastic cuts and fund the MTA’s capital program,” said Neysa Pranger, public affairs director, Regional Plan Association. “This should start with restoration of the \$143 million in disproportionate cuts included in the Deficit Reduction Plan and reimbursing the MTA for student Metrocards.”

“We are not asking the state for a bailout or handout,” said Veronica Vanterpool, associate director of the Tri-State Transportation Campaign. “We are asking state legislators to restore transit funds that were taken and to keep last year’s promise for a financially solvent and sustainable funding plan.”

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Members of the Empire State Transportation Alliance include: Regional Plan Association, NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign, General Contractors Association of New York, Environmental Defense Action Fund, Tri-State Transportation Campaign, New York State Laborers’, ACEC New York, Citizens Union Foundation, Campaign for New York’s Future, Construction Industry Council of New York, Long Island Contractor’s Association, Natural Resources Defense Council, New York State Building and Construction Trades Council, New York League of Conservation Voters, Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to MTA, Transportation Alternatives.