

MTA Capital Plan & 20-Year Assessment Review

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On August 10, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority released its 2010-2014 Capital Plan and 2010-2029 Needs Assessment, setting the stage for a renewed debate over how to fill the remaining funding gap in the \$28 billion plan. The big picture in these two reports comes to three major points:

- *The details of the five-year capital plan confirm that **fully funding this program is one of the most important actions the New York region needs to take to restore its economy and support sustainable, long-term growth.***
- ***At least \$10 billion in additional revenue is needed to fund the five-year plan.***
- *While it omits a few important priorities, **the 20-year Needs Assessment can be a blueprint for a longer-term strategy to modernize the transit system and keep pace with the needs of the region over the next generation.***

Many of the projects in both the five-year and 20-year plans are consistent with recommendations made by Regional Plan Association in its October 2008 report, *Tomorrow's Transit: New Mobility for the Region's Urban Core*.

Highlights of 2010-2014 Capital Plan

Funding Request: Capital Plan -- \$18.7B Core + \$5.7B Expansion + \$3.6 MTABT/Misc = \$28B

Funding Breakdown:

- ✓ Federal Funding = \$8.4B (assumes 25% increase above current levels)
- ✓ City/Fed (Bus) = \$160M
- ✓ City = \$500M (assumes 25% increase above current levels)
- ✓ MTAB&T = \$2.5B
- ✓ MTA Bonds (Bonded from Regional Mobility Tax & Other Taxes/Fees) = **\$6B**
- ✓ Asset Sales/Pay-as-you-go/Misc = \$600M

This adds up to only \$18B of the total \$28B funding request for the plan, a \$10B gap remains. Gap could be significantly higher if assumptions on federal and city funding and asset sales do not come through.

Plan Highlights:

In addition to the major core and expansion items, there are several service improvements worth noting:

- There is a large investment made in the signaling system, which will upgrade the Flushing line to CBTC and start work on Queen Blvd lines.
- In 2008 NYCT evaluated all 468 stations, examining 11,000 station components. Based on this evaluation the agency has re-prioritized rehabs or determined more efficient ways to upgrade the stations to a State of Good Repair (SOGR). They are calling these renewals.

- Section on Bus Rapid Transit includes funding for rolling stock purchases (\$110M) and depots (\$25M).
- Real-Time information on train status for commuter railroads and subway includes countdown clocks and other mobile solutions for the customer.
- Funding for contactless payment system (SMARTCARDS) is included to start the conversion of the fare system.
- There is a section called "Optimizing System Links," covering new transfers opportunities and addressing problems at the Nostrand Junction.
- "Improving Commuter Rail Stations in NYC" section includes funds for an extension of platforms at Kew Gardens (plus signal enhancements and new pocket tracks).
- In the Capital Planning Section there is mention of a "Cross-Borough Scoot" service between Jamaica and Flatbush/Atlantic Ave in Downtown Brooklyn.
- There is also funding (\$56M) for studies on solutions for Queens Blvd line congestion, the next phase of SI North Shore/West Shore & the Tier 2 Environmental Impact Statement for TZB (specifically the transit service).

2010-2029 Needs Assessment

Cost Estimate: \$128B over 20 years for all agencies

Plan Highlights:

- Signal Improvements is largest single categorical investment of \$14.7B -- If all goes according to plan 355 track miles would feature "communications based train control" (CBTC) signals by 2029, with the remaining 373 miles still conventionally signaled, but in a SOGR. The plan is to upgrade most of the IND (the oldest signals in operation now, dating back to the 1930's), Lexington Ave Line and Broadway Line. The 7th Ave/West Side IRT is also a candidate based on the outcome of a study that is proposed in this Assessment to examine options to increase capacity on this congested line.
- Main Line Corridor Improvements are front and center for the LIRR. The 3rd Track from Floral Park to Hicksville is combined with 2nd track from Farmingdale to Ronkonkoma. The MTA discussed a Republic intermodal hub station and the 110 north/south transit corridor. Lastly, the agency mentions the "scoot" service east of Ronkonkoma and for Oyster Bay, replacing one-seat ride service with a shuttle (there is also a brief reference to a Brooklyn Scoot service in the 2010-2014 Capital Plan).
- LIRR signals will be upgraded to centralized train control (CTC) and positive train control (PTC) (federal mandate for PTC by 2015 after the CA freight/passenger train collision). MNR will also be upgraded to PTC during this period as well.
- Considerable investments at Grand Central Terminal will continue over the next 20 years. MNR has spent \$450M to date and will need to spend at least that much or more to keep the terminal in a SOGR.
- MTAB&T will spend a considerable amount on the Bronx-Whitestone Bridge (70 years old), and their boothless/cashless tolling study should be complete by 2010. This study will determine whether the MTA follows the national trend of removing booths (this could lower the agencies' capital costs, since at least \$1B dollars over the next 20-years will be used to rebuild booth structures).
- Expansion --
 - **Existing Projects:** all of the Mega projects are mentioned, but only detail funding for Phase 1 of Second Avenue Subway (SAS). There is no section on the remaining phases (just a passing reference) or detail of the costs over the next 20-years (at least for phase 2 and/or 3).

- **New Expansion Projects:** are focused on five corridors -- Queens Blvd, 7th Ave, Staten Island (West Shore/North Shore), Tappan Zee Bridge & West of Hudson (Stewart/Port Jervis).
- **Regional Rail:** MTA discusses how the agency is open to through-service (and interagency cooperation) and that the Penn Access study will model a number of different through-service routes. This is, in their opinion, a significant way of increasing capacity at Penn Station New York (PSNY). Penn Access is also discussed as well, as another means of improving regional connectivity.
- **Penn Station Improvement:** circulation at PSNY must be addressed. In the short-term, the MTA advocates for Moynihan Station, but strongly feel the "center of gravity" is the original station footprint and that significant improvements must be made there as well.

What's Missing:

- Costs are not very detailed (for example it would be helpful for MTAB&T to provide listing of asset category costs for each facility or for NYCT to detail the CBTC implementation costs for each line).
- The next phases of Second Avenue Subway receive little attention when this should really be a section itself within the Expansion chapter.
- Based on references made in the plan, some supporting details were omitted from the Assessment. Two major examples are references to a *2008 Station Condition Survey* and recent MNR Penn Station Access modeling of through-service options. These reports should be shared to further justify the investments in the Assessment.