



Report Shows Cuts to Public Transit Disproportionately Hurt Older and Low-Income New Yorkers

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Nadine Lemmon, 917-767-7698, nadine@tstc.org

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Bill Ferris, 518-447-6712, wferris@aarp.org

Albany, NY – Today, AARP and Tri-State Transportation Campaign released a [report](#) showing New York State’s funding cuts to non-MTA public transportation that occurred between 2008 and 2011 have had a negative impact on transportation options for the elderly and low-income New Yorkers. Although no funding was cut in the state’s 2012 budget, this report shows increased funding and legislation preventing diversion of funds is needed.

“As New Yorkers age, they need transportation options to remain mobile and healthy,” stated Joan Parrot-Fonseca, AARP New York State Director. “For an older New Yorker, a lack of public transportation could mean the difference between being shut in or getting the necessities they need to live independently and stay active in their community as they age.”

“This year, no funding was cut from transit and no funding was diverted,” stated Kate Slevin, Executive Director of Tri-State Transportation Campaign. “What we need now is a law that will ensure the same in the future; that funding is sustained and does not continue to shrink so New Yorkers can have access to the transportation they need.”

The report, “Stuck at Home: How Cuts to Public Transit Disproportionately Hurt Seniors and Low-Income New Yorkers,” looks at five non-MTA public transit systems across New York State, including those in Westchester, Albany, Syracuse, Rochester, and Buffalo. Factors analyzed included transit ridership, how transit systems were affected by the recession, and how shrinking transit service impacted residents’ ability to stay mobile.

The report recommended three solutions:

1. Find new revenue sources providing stable, reliable, and diverse funds to meet transit demand.
2. Pass “lockbox” legislation that will deter the diversion of dedicated transit funds.

3. Increase the allocation of capital dollars to transit from sources such as the NY Works Fund.

Proposed 'lockbox' legislation (A9017-A/S6170-A) would help stem the tide of funds being diverted from transit services that has resulted from Albany's budget and deficit struggles. Between 2008 and 2011, funding cuts and taxes dedicated to transit were diverted to the state's general fund. These diversions came at a time when transit operators faced escalating costs that included increasing ridership, higher gas costs, and higher business costs for employees and insurance.

As a result of budget cuts and diverted funding, transit providers are forced to make difficult choices—raising fares, cutting service, and dipping into reserve and capital funds to keep their systems running. Shrinking dollars for transit means shrinking options for those who can least afford it—including low-income residents, seniors, and other transit-dependent populations.