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Pratt Center for Community Development | Raritan Valley Rail Coalition
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SMART Transportation Division (formerly UTU) | Straphangers Campaign
Sustainable Long Island | TransitCenter | Transit for Connecticut | Transit Solutions
Transportation Alternatives | Transport Workers Union Local 100
Tri-State Transportation Campaign | Vision Long Island**

Advocates From Across the Tri-State Region Call for Permanent Parity for the Transit Commuter Tax Benefit

32 organizations in three states urge Congress to make transit benefit equal with parking benefit

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Transit riders received a not-so-welcome gift on January 1 when the maximum pre-tax contribution for transit dropped from \$245 a month to \$130 a month, resulting in a de facto tax increase not only for 700,000 transit users in the tri-state region, but for commuters across the nation. The monthly cost of a transit pass exceeds \$130 for riders on at least 24 transit systems, impacting commuting in 20 states and the District of Columbia.

As Congress reconvenes in Washington for its first days of work in 2014, restoring parity to the commuter tax benefit for transit riders must be at the top of its to-do list. With an Appropriations Bill a top priority for Congress, there is an opportunity to restore the parity in the bill, and make the benefit permanent, in the next few weeks.

The expiration of parity for the transit commuter benefit means fewer dollars in transit riders' pockets -- and fewer dollars in the farebox too. When riders no longer have the option to use pre-tax dollars for transit passes, transit systems may face decreased ridership, which often leads to fare hikes and service cuts.

Just as the transit commuter benefit was slashed, the benefit for parking increased by \$5 to \$250 per month, which amounts to a federally-endorsed transportation policy that incentivizes driving, leading to more cars on the region's already congested and deteriorating roads. Restoring and enacting permanent parity for transit riders, and making that parity retroactive to January 1, establishes a balanced and progressive fiscal policy.

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