



Testimony of Ryan Lynch  
Housing and Urban Development Hearing on Sandy Funds  
March 5, 2014

Good evening. My name is Ryan Lynch, and I am the associate director of the Tri-State Transportation Campaign, a non-profit dedicated to creating a more balanced, environmentally friendly and equitable transportation system in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the needs of a post-Sandy region.

Of all of the indelible transportation images seen in the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy, no picture has better expressed the inadequacy of Long Island's existing transportation system—or the importance of adding resiliency and redundancy into the region's transportation network—as the images of cars lined up for miles to get gas. This is hardly the fault of residents and drivers, but rather of transportation and land use policies that for the past fifty years have prioritized the automobile over a more balanced transportation network.

This doesn't have to be Long Island's future, and in fact, exists in certain communities already on Long Island. Those communities on Long Island and in the region with access to multiple transportation options and choices tended to weather the storm more effectively. While drivers waited for hours to fill up at gas stations, transit riders on Long Island and throughout the region were heading back to work. The MTA had its bus system up and running a day after the storm and Nassau Inter-County Express and Suffolk County Transit riders were making their way to work on late Wednesday or early Thursday after the storm. Sandy highlighted that mass transit truly is the economic lifeblood of our region.

An even starker contrast emerged between communities that had access to safe walking and biking transportation infrastructure and those that did not. Communities with roads designed for pedestrians and cyclists and not just automobiles were able to rebound from the storm much quicker than in those communities that lacked this type of infrastructure. All we have to do is look at the increase in cycling in New York City in the aftermath of the storm. On the Thursday after Sandy, NYCDOT saw a 150% increase in cycling across the East River Bridges. This increase was largely due to the investments that have been made over the past few years to promote safe infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians. The investments not only made people feel comfortable using a bicycle as a transportation option measure, but the investments also served as an economic development strategy as well. Instead of being stranded in traffic or at home with no transportation options, people were safely getting to and from work on bicycles, shopping and even aiding in relief efforts.

Recovery funds must be dedicated to strengthening and expanding our transit networks, implementing bicycle and pedestrian safety infrastructure projects and greening our transportation system in general. But it is important to note that these improvements will not only help Long Island and the region weather future storms, but improve the economy, environment and quality of life of communities and residents every day.

One idea that should be pursued grows out of New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo's NYS 2100 Commission. The Commission called for a "World Class Bus Rapid Transit System," a system that could work well in certain places on Long Island to enhance north/south transit options. Using these funds to

fast track the exploration BRT on Long Island as well as using funds to take the first step of enacting first phases of bus rapid transit, like dedicated bus lanes on the region's roadways, can improve transportation options year round, not just in time of crisis.

In addition, using these funds to support expanded pedestrian safety and protected bicycle infrastructure will not only enhance mobility, mitigate congestion and reduce greenhouse gases, it will also improve the safety of Long Island's roadways for pedestrians and cyclists. Long Island's roads have been named some of the most dangerous for cycling in the region by *Newsday* and a Tri-State analysis found that from 2010-2012, 210 pedestrians were killed along Long Island's roadways. New York State only spends 2 percent of its transportation funding on bicycle and pedestrian projects yet cyclists and pedestrians account for 27 percent of total traffic fatalities in the state.

And prioritizing funding to transit and walking and biking projects will not only help the region recover physically, but also help bolster a still lagging economy battered by the storm. That's because these types of investments have a track record of results of generating economic development and reducing costs for residents:

- A recent Tri-State analysis found that almost a half a billion dollars was added to the regional economy as a result of investments in the Westchester and Nassau County's bus systems in 2012;
- According to the American Public Transportation Association for every \$1 billion invested on transit capital projects, 24,000 jobs are created. Investment in transit operating generates even more jobs: 41,000 jobs for every \$1 billion in operating support;
- The Surface Transportation Policy Project found that in vehicle dependent households, transportation costs are 20 percent higher than in households with Complete Streets;
- The UMASS-Amherst Political Economy Research Institute found that for every \$1 million invested, bicycling and pedestrian infrastructure projects created more jobs than road projects alone;

Tri-State urges Governor Cuomo to use this funding to build resiliency and redundancy into Long Island's transportation system. Not doing so will be a missed opportunity that Long Islanders will feel every day, not just when storms hit.