



Testimony of Ryan Lynch, Associate Director
NYC Transportation Committee Hearing on Preliminary FY15 Budget
March 6, 2014

Good morning. My name is Ryan Lynch, and I am the associate director for the Tri-State Transportation Campaign, a non-profit policy watchdog working in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the proposed FY 2015 New York City budget.

By calling for the reduction of traffic fatalities to zero and for the expansion of high quality mass transit service to underserved communities, Mayor de Blasio has set an ambitious agenda for his administration to meet in the coming years. Tri-State applauds both policies and hopes that, in concert with members of the City Council, they can be implemented as quickly as possible. In order to do so, New York City will need to make transportation funding a greater priority beginning with this year's budget.

MTA Support and SBS Funding

In 1982, New York City was contributing over \$200 million to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's Capital Program (MTA) to help ensure our buses and subways were in a state of good repair and that the economic lifeblood of our City kept pumping. Today, New York City is contributing half of that sum. We urge the City Council to double the City's contribution in this year's budget. While this increase would not yet match the City's funding to 1982 levels given inflation, it would go a long way towards supporting the beleaguered Authority's Capital Program and provide a solid down payment on continuing to improve and enhance our transit system.

In addition, in order to achieve the expansion of high quality Select Bus Service (SBS) and world class bus rapid transit (BRT) along certain corridors in underserved communities, more investment from New York City is needed. It is important, however, that funding for these expanded services do not come at the cost of existing funding to the MTA system. New York City must broaden the funding pot, not divvy it up further. To date, New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) and MTA have launched an SBS route every 12-15 months on average. In order to achieve the 20 routes the Mayor proposed to implement, additional funding for NYCDOT outreach staff will be necessary and additional operating support to MTA is imperative.

Vision Zero Fund

Funding for New York City Department of Transportation remains static in this year's budget, while at the same time the Mayor has called for the implementation of the Vision Zero Action Plan released last month. In order to fully implement Vision Zero's admirable goals of zero traffic fatalities, the Council should establish the creation of a Vision Zero Implementation Fund, or a dedicated budget for Vision Zero implementation. Ensuring adequate funds is integral to making certain the Vision Zero concept translates to reality quickly.

This budget proposal can modeled on the dedicated implementation fund and budget for PlaNYC, and would complement existing DOT work and funding to allow the agency, as well as other city agencies and stakeholders included in the Vision Zero Interagency Task Force, to implement actions outlined in the Vision Zero Action Plan. For example, a Vision Zero Fund could help to implement additional driver education and pilot new technologies for all Taxi and Limousine Commission drivers and vehicles, while also helping NYCDOT fast track the mayor's call to redesign fifty dangerous and unsafe intersections or corridors a year.

In short, the more funds available, the quicker Vision Zero can be achieved.

Citi Bike Expansion

By all accounts, the less than a year old bike share system has been an overwhelming success. Since its launch last May, membership has grown to nearly 100,000 annual members and even what can be only be conservatively described as rough winter, daily ridership, while lower than other times of year, has stayed strong, on certain days generating over 20,000 daily trips. Demand for Citi Bike expansion began immediately after its launch, and the continued success of the program has led to requests for expansion in all five boroughs. Unfortunately, without additional funding, expansion will be slow going. The City Council should add a Citi Bike line item to the budget help speed up bike share expansion to all corners of the City.

Transportation, Economic Development and Quality of Life

Finally, greenways are the place where our transportation and open space needs meet in New York City. The Hudson River Greenway has served to reconnect Manhattan residents with the waterfront and open space and has become an economic boon since its inception. Other boroughs deserve equal attention. No place better exemplifies this than the Bronx River Greenway, which is becoming a central north-south transportation artery (and a segment of the East Coast Greenway), while also adding new riverfront parkland— 18 acres so far --in South Bronx neighborhoods that desperately need green space. When complete, the Bronx River Greenway will encompass 12 miles of trail in NYC, of which nine miles are now in place. However, the Greenway can be difficult to find and critical gaps impair its overall usefulness as a transportation corridor. To help bridge the gap, we urge you to provide \$3 million from City Council capital allocations to NYCDOT or the Department of Parks for Starlight Phase 2 of the Bronx River Greenway to ensure this critical gap is closed.