



**Testimony of Ryan Lynch on Proposed Nassau County's 2015 Budget  
October 1, 2014  
Nassau County Legislature**

My name is Ryan Lynch, and I am the associate director for the Tri-State Transportation Campaign, a non-profit policy watchdog dedicated to creating a more balanced, environmentally-friendly and equitable transportation system in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.

In order to help fill a 2014 NICE funding deficit of roughly \$3.3 million, Nassau County agreed last spring to increase its funding for the bus system by \$1.8 million. This 70 percent increase in funding would bring the County's total contribution to NICE up to \$4.4 million.

According to the recently released budget proposal, however, the County's contribution remains stagnant at \$2.5 million a year. It is not clear if the County's pledge of \$1.8 million to help close the funding gap has already been allocated. In addition, the budget estimates that the system will generate \$51.4 million in farebox revenue — a nearly 13 percent increase over NICE's 2014 farebox revenue estimate of \$45.6 million.

How this revenue jump will occur is not outlined in the budget, and seems far-fetched given that NICE annual ridership in 2013 was at a 15 year low, according to the National Transit Database. And through July, ridership is only slightly higher than that of 2013.

A concern for advocates and riders is that the County is shirking its commitment to increasing its contribution by \$1.8 million, or instead relying on the revenue expected from an anticipated 4 percent fare hike in spring 2015, also valued at \$1.8 million to close that funding gap.

It wouldn't be the first time fare hikes were used to balance NICE's shoestring budget. Cash-paying riders saw their fares increase by 25 cents and MetroCard using riders were hit with a similar fare hike in 2013 as well.

It's time for Nassau County to stop balancing the budget on the backs of bus riders and do more to support a system that accounts for almost \$200 million in economic output a year and supports nearly 1,500 jobs.

Tri-State was also hoping to see the creation of a Complete Streets Implementation Fund in this year's budget. In August of 2013, the Legislature adopted a Complete Streets policy as a way to improve safety on Nassau County's roadways, increase transportation options for non-motorized users, reduce congestion and spur economic development.

The next step to building Complete Streets is identify funds to build the pedestrian islands, more visible crosswalks, protected bicycle lanes and other traffic calming measures that help achieve safer, more balanced and vibrant streetscapes.

In June of this year, Suffolk County adopted an amendment to its Capital Program that dedicates \$250,000 a year to Complete Streets projects. We urge Nassau County to adopt a similar measure.

Thank you.