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**Long Island Advocates, Labor, Transit Operators and Businesses:  
State Budget Threatens Transit, More Funding Needed**

**MINEOLA, NY**—Today, a diverse group—advocates, labor, transit operators and local businesses—called on the New York State Legislature and Governor Cuomo to support critically-needed transit systems throughout New York State and to ensure that the final state budget includes both capital investment and additional operating aid for non-MTA transit.

The 2015-16 Executive Budget proposes zero growth in state operating assistance (STOA) for upstate and downstate transit systems, other than a small increase for the MTA, and it fails to fully-fund a statewide transit capital plan. The cost to provide quality transit service increases each year. Although fuel costs are down, pension, health care and paratransit operating costs continue to rise. Transit systems cannot continue to operate current services at existing funding levels. Systems across the state are bracing for the possibility that they will have to raise fares and/or cut service in order to address the funding gap in their budgets.

Leaders on Long Island are asking the state to reject the Governor's proposal to take \$121.5 million of dedicated operating revenue from the Metropolitan Mass Transportation Operating Assistance (MMTOA) program and the proposal to move those funds to capital. Rejecting this proposal ensures that an additional \$1.5 million in operating funds would go

to Suffolk County Transit and \$3.8 million would go to NICE; a 6 percent increase over last year. Additionally, a substantial capital investment of \$100 million for both the suburban downstate and upstate public transportation systems is needed.

The New York Public Transit Association has developed [a five-year suburban and upstate capital plan](#) that identifies \$1 billion in capital needs; half of the plan is currently unfunded. This plan covers basic system state-of-good-repair and improvements. On Long Island, NICE will need to replace 180 buses, and Suffolk County Transit needs to replace 185 buses. In Nassau County, \$18.9 million is needed to improve facilities (including replacing the CNG Fueling station compressors), replace and upgrade fareboxes, and replace CNG facility high-speed overhead doors. In Suffolk County, \$9.6 million is needed for a GPS-aided vehicle locator system, to replace fareboxes and upgrade to smartcard, and to improve bus stop shelters. Capacity expansion projects include implementation of bus rapid transit in Suffolk County.

On the operating side, New York's transit systems are enjoying unprecedented growth in ridership, productivity and popularity. Consequently, passenger revenue is rising, but state transit operating assistance has not kept up with demand. Systems have been forced to divert significant portions of their federal capital funds to meet day-to-day operating costs, a long-term fiscally unsound maneuver. NICE's operating costs increase each year; in 2015, there will be a 3.5 percent contractual wage increase and a 7 percent health insurance increase. But the STOA subsidy is neither adequate nor reliable: in 2012 there was zero increase, in 2013 it increased 9 percent and in 2014 it increased 2 percent.

"NICE bus is an essential service, not just to the tens of thousands of riders who use it daily, but to the economic vitality of the region. STOA is NICE's largest source of revenue, almost half of our total annual budget," said NICE CEO Mike Setzer, who serves on the board of directors of the New York Public Transit Association, a not-for-profit that includes public transit providers, private sector manufacturers and suppliers, state agencies and community advocates. "The lack of an increase in the 2015 draft state budget greatly increases the possibility that NICE will have to reduce service."

"For many residents of Long Island, the buses are the only mode of transportation that can get them to work, school and doctor's appointments. Long Island needs a bus system that reflects and supports the needs of bus riders, and the only way to sustain that is if our State's leadership shows a deeper investment in our public transportation system," said Anita Halasz, Executive Director of Long Island Jobs with Justice.

"The jobs created, supported and available because of transit makes this a solid state investment in Long Island. NICE operations alone accounted for 1,490 jobs and \$191.5 million in economic output in Nassau County," said Veronica Vanterpool, Executive Director of Tri-State Transportation Campaign. "Additionally, New York has a premiere cluster of transit manufacturing businesses that would benefit significantly from a fully-funded statewide capital plan. Put simply, funding transit is good business."

"Amending the NYS budget will bring needed bus investment to workers, students and seniors who rely on this service," said Eric Alexander, Vision Long Island Director.

"I know that we provide a necessary service for the people of Nassau and Queens County," said Debra Hagan, President of TWU Local 252, representing the transit operators of NICE Bus. "It is imperative that New York State budget a proportionate amount of funds to this area to address the populations' needs. A reduction in service would create a hardship to the communities as well as a loss of income and jobs which would have an adverse effect on the economics of this region."

"Increased, sustained funding is not only critical to the future of the transit systems, it is also very important to the New York-based businesses that provide transit products and services," said Joe Saporita, Senior Vice President of Clever Devices on Long Island. "If we have stability in future investment levels, we can more accurately forecast our future employment needs and ensure that we have the right resources to deliver the new technologies our customers need."

"Over the past three months I have had some of the worst experiences that I've ever had with NICE Bus. I have had to wait out in this blistering cold for buses, like the N50 and N74, that never show up yet fares for the buses keep rising. I pay for the bus, I have paid my share, but where is the county's share, or the state's for that matter," said Richard Clolery, Long Island Bus Riders' Union member. "New York State needs to pay their share to Long Island buses and stop expecting bus riders to continue to pay higher fares for lower service."

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