

# Empire State Transportation Alliance

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** July 27, 2015

**FROM:** Empire State Transportation Alliance

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## **Response of the Empire State Transportation Alliance to Funding of the MTA Capital Program by New York State and City**

We are encouraged by the recent commitments announced last week by the MTA and Governor Cuomo to close the MTA funding shortfall. The livelihoods of millions of people--from transit riders, operators, construction workers and manufacturers--is contingent on the full funding agreement executed between the state, city and MTA for a five year capital program. What happened last week with Amtrak/NJT symbolizes what the future has in store for us if we don't make the necessary investments in our region's future.

The MTA Capital Plan is a base minimum to keep our city and region functional and meet current demand and already increased ridership. There are a number of transportation projects that are important and lack funding. A rapid, successful result in funding the current MTA needs, will set the tone for the collective will to tackle those needs as well and get things done.

Two key concerns, however, emerge in the funding discussion: how will the state and city generate the revenue to meet their increased contributions to the MTA and how heavily will the new capital program rely on debt? The MTA already owes \$34 billion, more than the national debt of dozens of foreign countries and NYC Transit riders pay the largest share of transit operations amongst systems in the U.S.

We applaud the efforts of these key funding partners to not only jumpstart the discussions about how to close the \$14 billion funding gap after the legislative session has ended, but to do so without decimating the size of the program. While the MTA has committed to the same projects in a reduced \$26.8 billion program, a program of this size still does not fully address the long-term needs of the system.

The lack of a timely, adequately funded and implemented capital plan turns what should be a win-win into a lose-lose that impacts millions of riders and adversely impacts the Region's economy. Both the city and state need to make some tough decisions to ensure we have the necessary funding to adopt the program.

Millions of people rely on the outcome of the ensuing negotiations and we look forward to working with the city and state to come up with a solution that protects the integrity of our mass transit system and gives us the ability to expand it. Projects that improve reliability, frequency and modernity of the system—from signal and track work to Second Avenue Subway and East Side Access will allow us to continue displaying the welcome sign for the millions more expected to call New York home over the next two decades.

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