

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Tri-State Transportation Campaign Statement On MIT Coronavirus Study**

*Today, Jeffrey Harris, an MIT economist and physician, circulated an argument that the NYC subway system was a major—if not principal—transmission vehicle of the initial spike of coronavirus infection seen in New York City during March 2020. In response, Tri-State Transportation Campaign released the following statement:*

“While it is tempting to call out a transit system for the rapid transmission of coronavirus, it is an overreach to lay the fault at any single system, let alone imply causation from anecdotal correlation. The author scapegoats the subway system as the culprit, but the data and analysis are not peer-reviewed, lack proper modeling, and what little analysis there is does not support any causation. It is more opinion than scientific research.

“The paper narrowly focuses on two lines, the 7 and the F/M, to correlate station maps to incidence, but pattern falls apart in uptown Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Staten Island. If there was a true correlation between transit ridership and virus transmission we would expect to see a ‘dose-response’ relationship between that and COVID-19 cases. This is not the case.

“Numerous articles and analyses highlight other much more fundamental drivers of case rates—namely socioeconomic factors, including housing density, income, race, and especially non-essential vs essential occupations. As people who are higher income are more likely to have an occupation that allows work from home can social distance sooner. In general, wealth follows health.

“We at Tri-State agree with only one opinion in this thesis: ‘From the public health perspective, the optimal policy would have been to double—maybe even triple—the frequency of train service.’ The subways are an integral part of the city’s density, from grocery stores to schools, and should be treated as any other aspects of density: increase support to increase service, reducing density and thus transmission. As the city considers how to return to a less distant life, we should be thinking about how we can ensure that it’s as safe an experience as possible.”

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*Founded in 1993, Tri-State Transportation Campaign is dedicated to reducing car dependency in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. TSTC has four main priorities: fixing our commutes, meeting our climate goals, stopping traffic deaths, and making transportation fair. Learn more at [tstc.org](http://tstc.org).*