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Tri-State Transportation Campaign Statement on
Bipartisan Emergency Aid Proposal

Today, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer signalled support for a $908 billion bipartisan, bicameral proposal as a starting point for emergency relief aid. Of that amount, $15 billion would be allocated toward helping to prop up the nation's transit agencies, whose budgets have been decimated by losses of farebox, tax, and toll revenues since the initial COVID-19 shutdowns began in March 2020. The House-passed "HEROES Act II" in May included $32 billion for transit, already far short of the estimated $40 billion needed to keep public transit from collapsing. In response, Tri-State Transportation Campaign released the following statement:

"The $980 billion proposal is a good start toward pulling our nation's transit agencies, and the MTA in particular, off the precipice of full-blown collapse. The latest bipartisan proposal is an acknowledgement of the basic needs of transit. Nevertheless, we continue to call on Congress to save our nation's transit systems through approval of the full $32 billion in funding agencies have identified as necessary to survive the fallout from COVID-19. Meanwhile, the newest version of a 'skinny bill' proposed by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell continues to leave America's essential workers, rural communities, and economically critical metropolitan areas stranded with zero funds for transit.

"A recent study released by APTA shows that 77% of our nation's voters across party lines support the need for transit funding. Nevertheless, in the face of such widespread support, the Republican leadership is once again showing itself to be out of step with the priorities of the majority of Americans.

"The transit crisis in New York City and across the nation is worsening with each moment of delay and inaction. If Congress once again fails to deliver, we risk seeing major service cuts--the likes of which we have never previously imagined. As a sign of things to come without emergency relief, yesterday, Washington, DC's Metro announced its next year's budget

proposal outlining the closure of 19 stations, total elimination of weekend rail service, and the slashing half of their bus routes, among other draconian steps to staunch their deficit.

"Similarly, the MTA is looking at the very real possibility of not only raising fares higher than originally anticipated, but laying off nearly 10,000 workers (mostly bus drivers), and slashing bus and subway service by 40 percent and commuter rail service by 50 percent. Even after these dire reductions, the MTA will still be left with a multi-billion dollar budget gap, not to mention freezing capital construction and any hope of modernizing our antiquated system.

"It's important for Congress to understand that transit service cannot be easily restored after the pandemic wanes--it's not the same as simply using less water during a drought. Transit is a sophisticated infrastructure system that relies on a highly skilled, specialized workforce; delicate machinery that needs to be properly maintained to protect the safety of and reliability for riders; and it has a core base of riders, mostly essential workers, who rely on it, and in turn, whom our nation relies upon to keep society functioning.

"Americans agree--transit is foundational to our nation's economy and social fabric. Senate Republicans must get on board and act to fund transit today, before it is too late."

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Tri-State Transportation Campaign is a 27-year old advocacy organization that fights for an equitable, safe, multi-modal transportation network that provides options and supports the economies of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. TSTC works to fix our commutes, meet our climate goals, stop traffic deaths, and make transportation fair.