



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Advocates Call on Governor Kathy Hochul to Prioritize Federal Infrastructure Funds on Mass Transit and Climate Goals Instead of Destructive Highway Projects

On Thursday, April 21, 2022, a coalition of transportation, disability, and environmental advocates sent a letter to Governor Kathy Hochul, NYS Senators and Assemblymembers, calling on the state to invest federal infrastructure funds on mass transit, climate, equity, and accessibility goals instead of projects such as widening highways that destroy communities.

[Read the letter here.](#)

“Today we stand on the precipice of catastrophic climate change. More than 30% of carbon emissions in New York state come from vehicles,” **said Felicia Park-Rogers, Director of Regional Infrastructure at Tri-State Transportation Campaign.** “We call on Governor Hochul to stand by her bold vision to tackle both the environment and equity in her budget. Governor Hochul has an unprecedented opportunity to transform New York’s transit and transportation infrastructure networks by using the Infrastructure Bill’s massive influx of dollars in ways never before dreamed of. Governor Hochul can choose to fix roads, expand transit, build safe and connected sidewalks and bikeways, and much more. The time to leave behind 20th Century transportation planning, for example, spending billions of dollars on useless highway expansions, is now. We urge Governor Hochul to seize this unique moment and make her mark on history.”

“Most people in NYC take mass transit instead of cars. If we want people to get out of their cars, we have to improve and expand accessible mass transit. Expanding roads only increases traffic,” **said Jean Ryan, President of Disabled in Action of Metropolitan NY (DIA).**



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“Until New York’s trains and buses run as frequently and reliably as they do in our global peer cities, Governor Hochul should not spend a single dime on highway expansions,” **said Danny Pearlstein, Policy & Communications Director for Riders Alliance**. “Until every subway station is accessible to New Yorkers who can’t climb stairs, Governor Hochul must not tie up regional construction industry capacity on Andrew Cuomo’s multibillion dollar boondoggle of wider highways to JFK Airport. Until New York has met the mandates of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, Governor Hochul should take every opportunity to shrink rather than grow our dependence on dirty fossil fuel infrastructure that divides our communities and dims our hopes for the future.”

“People with disabilities face disproportionate challenges associated with climate change. Not only are they more likely to have medical conditions exacerbated by poor air quality, but their ability to maintain access to life-sustaining medical equipment or safely evacuate during a natural disaster have proven to be problems in past natural disasters. Please consider whether the negative long-term impacts of highway widening on the most vulnerable New Yorkers are worth an illusory short-term convenience to drivers,” **said Jessica Murray, a member of the Rise and Resist Elevator Action Group**.

“It’s completely unnecessary,” **said Ramsay Adams, Executive Director of Catskill Mountainkeeper**. “New York State has identified specific problem areas along the highway that could be addressed with targeted measures and repairs. Expanding Route 17 is a waste of limited funding; the money would be better invested in climate-smart transit projects that help New York meet its emissions reduction goals.”

“The New York City region depends heavily on public transit, and many riders have no other option to get where they’re going. With an unprecedented influx of transportation funding from the federal government, it’s vital that these dollars be used equitably to benefit the New Yorkers who need it most: by supporting our public transit system instead of expanding highways and encouraging driving. There is precedent for reallocating highway funds to transit in New York State, from as far back as when funding was moved from the Westway Highway project in the ‘80s to fund portions of the MTA’s 1987-1991 Capital Program. It’s still relevant today under federal regulation; the state DOT just has to request it. We urge the state to do that with IIJA highway funds. Funding transit expansions over highway expansions will be the only way the state can truly reach its climate goals,” **said Bradley Brashears, Planning Manager at the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC)**.



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"New York State can only achieve its ambitious climate goals by reducing our reliance on personal vehicles and prioritizing transit," **said Kate Slevin, Executive Vice President of the Regional Plan Association.** "Widening highways will only induce more demand and lead to worse health, safety, and environmental outcomes for New Yorkers. RPA hopes that Governor Hochul will reconsider plans to widen the Van Wyck and Route 17 and focus instead on using the State's considerable resources to knit the neighborhoods torn apart from highway construction back together again."

"In the face of a climate catastrophe we implore the Governor: do not fund any additional highway widenings. The evidence is clear that widening highways only induces more demand, causing more traffic and more pollution. The federal funding for highways is flexible and instead of widening highways it should be used to widen and physically protect bike lanes, to create complete streets and to reduce car dependency," **said Sara Lind, Director of Policy, Open Plans.**

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Tri-State Transportation Campaign is a 501(c)(3) non-profit policy and advocacy organization fighting for sustainable mobility in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. [Learn more.](#)



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