



Press Release



Office of the County Executive
Contact: Scott Salotto (845) 638-5645

Office of the County Legislature
Contact: Betsy Saetre (845) 638-5184

Chairman Wolfe, County Executive Day and Rockland Leaders: State Budget Needs to do More for Transit

New City, NY (March 5, 2015) - Local and State officials are calling 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 systems, like Transport of Rockland.

Rockland's local and state elected officials have joined Chairman of the Rockland County Legislature Alden H. Wolfe and County Executive Ed Day in 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 an additional \$193,000 in operating funds for Transport of Rockland; a 6% increase over last year.

The 2015-16 Executive Budget proposes zero growth in state operating assistance (STOA) for Rockland County as well as other 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.

On the capital side, the New York Public Transit Association has developed [a 5-year suburban and upstate capital plan](#) that identifies \$1 billion in capital needs. Half of the plan is currently unfunded, and the plan doesn't cover all needs—such as the capital needs for the proposed 7 new bus routes in the I-287 corridor, proposed in [the final report New NY Bridge Mass Transit Task Force](#). A substantial capital investment of \$100 million or more, for both the suburban downstate and upstate public transportation systems, is needed—this number would fill the gap in NYPTA's proposed capital plan, for one year.

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.

Statements of Local and State Elected Officials Follow

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Chairman Alden H. Wolfe: "With the coming of the new Tappan Zee Bridge, this is a crossroads moment for Rockland's ability to provide adequate mass transit. We must have sufficient funding from the state to get this right. This is the worst time for the state to level out our transit funding. Rockland already suffers from a value gap--with a history of not getting our fair share of transit services and funds. Providing attractive transit options will encourage more people to get out of their cars and use public transportation. The State must understand that transit funding is a sound investment as it will strengthen our regional economy and benefit our environment.

County Executive Ed Day: "Regrettably, State Transportation Operating Assistance has remained flat for several years, while our costs to operate public transportation have risen dramatically," said County Executive Ed Day. "Our reliance on Federal Transit Administration (FTA) capital funding to support operations, which we have been doing over the last four years, is not sustainable in the long-term. I join my fellow elected officials in calling on Governor Cuomo and the state Legislature to boost funding in his proposed Executive Budget to support our public transit systems."

Legislator Harriet Cornell: "For years I have called upon New York State and regional agencies to focus on Rockland's unmet transit needs, with funds to be dedicated to west of Hudson transit improvements. As a member of the Governor's Mass Transit Task Force, I identified projects that could enhance transit access to Manhattan, projects included in the TF Report to the Governor: capacity improvements to the Pascack Valley Line, inclusion of the "Bergen Loop" in Amtrak's Gateway tunnel project to give Rockland a one-seat ride to Penn Station; and restoration of West Shore line passenger service. It is beyond disappointing that the Governor has proposed zero growth in operating assistance for Rockland, not recognizing the inferior transit opportunities for those who live on the West side of the Hudson. None of these projects was included in the MTA 2015-19 capital plan. And no agency has been appointed to run the Bus Rapid Transit system for the Tappan Zee Bridge corridor to improve transit for commuters to and from Westchester. Rockland has been and continues to be an "orphan" on the west side of the Hudson."

Assemblymember Ellen Jaffee: "It makes good financial sense to invest in our transportation system now and for the future. In order to address critical challenges, meet rising need and ensure a more affordable, efficient, sustainable and safer transit system for everyone who depends on it across NY State, I call upon the Governor and my colleagues in the Assembly to provide the necessary funding in the final budget."

Assemblyman James Skoufis: "West-of-Hudson counties, including Rockland, face a tremendous value gap that needs to be addressed in this year's state budget - for all that we pay into transportation, we get a fraction of every dollar back in service. I stand with my legislative colleagues in calling for a significant increase in state operating assistance and a significant commitment to West-of-Hudson counties in the 2015-2019 MTA Capital Program that is being negotiated."

Clarkstown Supervisor Alex Gromack: "Efforts to improve public transportation for commuters and residents are essential to the Town of Clarkstown and Rockland County. We encourage and promote the use of our public transportation systems in an effort to protect our environment and minimize vehicle traffic on our roads. Our current plans for the Nanuet Transit Oriented Development project would potentially include a multi-modal station that integrates bus and rail services. We support the County's request for operating aid that would benefit the Transport of Rockland (TOR) transit system."

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