

July 16, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Leader McConnell:

I am writing today to urge you to include additional relief funding for the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) and Port Authority of New York and New Jersey in upcoming legislation expected to be considered in the Senate that addresses the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis. Specifically, I request that you include funding for public transit that is sufficient to provide the MTA with at least \$3.9 billion in federal funds to address the devastating fare and other revenue losses due to the sharp decrease in ridership and the economic shutdown resulting from the pandemic in New York. I also request that you include language that allows the Port Authority, as a bi-state agency, to access federal funding to cover lost revenues of up to \$3 billion. At a time when New Yorkers are beginning to go back to work, we must ensure that the MTA and Port Authority are fully equipped to operate safely and efficiently.

The MTA is the nation's largest transportation network that serves 15.3 million people throughout New York City and the surrounding areas including Long Island, southeastern New York State, and Connecticut. This massive public transit network comprises our country's largest bus fleet, and includes more subway and commuter rail cars than all other U.S. transit systems combined in one of the largest economic engines of America. This unprecedented public health crisis has put the MTA's budget in a dire situation with the Authority's officials projecting a \$10.3 billion loss through 2021. This deficit, if left unchecked, will have devastating consequences on the lives of millions of New Yorkers who rely on the MTA's vital transit services to commute to and from home for work. Without additional federal assistance commuters in the Greater New York City Area could face mass service reductions and raised fares. The tens of thousands of essential workers of the MTA are also at risk of potentially losing their jobs in a time of economic hardship for so many already.

The Port Authority relies heavily on toll revenues from bridges and tunnels between New York and New Jersey, user fees from the airports and bus terminals which include some of the busiest in the nation, fares on its rail transit system, and rent from facilities, consumer services and retail stores. Due to the drastic drop in travel because of the pandemic, the Port Authority has signaled to Congress that it will need up to \$3 billion to make up for its anticipated revenue losses over

the next 24 months. This could result in devastating cuts to infrastructure projects needed to improve airports, bridges, tunnels, rail, and cargo ports that would normally be funded through the Port Authority's Capital Program. Port Authority officials have kept these facilities operating despite these unprecedented circumstances and desperately need federal assistance as we begin to reopen if they are to continue providing essential services for transportation and commerce to millions of Americans.

The HEROES Act made two pots of funding available for transit agencies by formula to urbanized areas with populations above 3 million, and \$4 billion in discretionary funding to be awarded after soliciting applications. Within the formula appropriation, 15 percent would be allocated for Urbanized Area formula grants (Section 5307), and the remaining 85 percent for State of Good Repair grants (Section 5337). I urge you to include at least \$3.9 billion in federal funding through these formulas to address the MTA's drastic financial situation as a result of the pandemic.

Additionally, while I recognize the HEROES Act is beneficial to transit agencies who are eligible for these formula funds, it does not address the specific and unique needs of bi-state agencies like the Port Authority. Historically, the Port Authority has never received funding through these transit formulas, with the exception of airport formula funding, because the pots of funding do not currently exist for bi-state agencies. Unfortunately, the airport formula funding alone has not been sufficient enough to cover the Port Authority's urgent need of \$3 billion. That is why I ask that you include language that allows the Port Authority, as a bi-state agency, to access federal funding to cover lost revenues, and include public transit funding that is sufficient to provide the Port Authority with at least \$3 billion in federal aid.

The MTA and Port Authority have been warning Congress of their drastic financial situation for months, which is why I am urging that you appropriate this essential federal aid in the upcoming relief legislation. The workforce that relies on these public transit agencies for a paycheck, and the commuters, travelers and commerce that relies on the services they provide desperately need this federal assistance as we begin to shape and transition into a post-COVID era.

Thank you for your consideration of this request, and please do not hesitate to contact my staff if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator