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GROUPS PAN GOVERNOR'S PROPOSAL TO DEAL WITH MTA CAPITAL AT "LATER DATE"

NEW YORK, May 3, 2009 – The Empire State Transportation Alliance – a coalition of business, civic, labor and environmental organizations supporting investment in transportation today released the following statement:

The Empire State Transportation Alliance (ESTA) is deeply concerned about Governor Paterson's proposal on Saturday, May 2 to defer addressing the MTA's capital budget until some "later date." The Alliance is a broad coalition of business, civic and transportation advocacy groups which supports adequate funding for New York's transportation systems. A letter from ESTA sent to the governor and leaders on Friday, May 1 expressing concern over the plan not including adequate capital funding follows.

"In light of what has transpired as well as what has failed to happen to date, we have little confidence that the Governor and Legislature will be able to come together to address the urgent capital needs of the MTA once such a band-aid is applied" said Kevin Corbett, Co-Chair of ESTA. He went on to note that "Since 1980 governors and legislatures of both parties have worked together to rebuild the MTA's subway, bus and commuter rail systems. Abandoning the commitments made will bring on a collapse of the system 9 million riders depend on daily."

"The Governor appears to be abandoning the commitments he has made for months to implement the funding proposals first made by the Ravitch Commission," said Bob Yaro, President of Regional Plan Association, and ESTA's other Co-Chair. "The Commission was appointed by Governor Paterson to develop a financing strategy for both the operating and capital budget shortfalls of the MTA, now estimated to total just short of \$2 billion per year. We urge the Governor and Legislature to summon the political will to meet all of the MTA's financial needs at the same time, and not to abandon the system's nine million daily riders to higher fares and tolls and deteriorating service."

"I'm surprised that they're abandoning efforts to address the operating and capital needs of the MTA at the same time," said Gene Russianoff, Staff Attorney of the NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign. He added that, "The governor rejected a deal from the Senate to do just that weeks ago and the whole premise of the Ravitch Commission - which the Governor appointed and whose report he endorsed - was to deal with all of the MTA's financial needs. That makes sense, since these financial needs are all interrelated. The fare is how much you paid, service is what you get and capital improvements determine the quality of the ride, such as whether you are riding on a 42-year-old car or are at the mercy of 80 year-old signals."

“We now stand at the precipice of disaster thanks to Gov Paterson and the state senators who failed to agree on funding for the MTA,” said Denise Richardson, managing director of the General Contractors Association.

“Governor Paterson's proposed solution is no solution at all,” said Richard T. Anderson, President, New York Building Congress. “What was the purpose of the nonpartisan Ravitch Commission if our leaders in Albany, at the first sign of political opposition, are willing to totally abandon the commission's rational blueprint for addressing all of the MTA's capital and operating needs? Deferring action on the MTA's vast and growing capital needs is bad public policy and a recipe for disaster. Albany must show the will and the courage to get back to the table and craft a financial plan that addresses the MTA's needs holistically and spreads the burden among those who benefit from a fully functioning transit system.”

“The consequences of not addressing the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's capital needs would be devastating, immediate and long-term,” said Marcia Bystryn, president of the New York League of Conservation Voters. “For the sake of the millions of people who rely on safe and effective mass transit every day, Governor Paterson, Majority Leader Smith and Assembly Speaker Silver must return to the negotiating table and hammer out a real solution to this funding crisis as soon as possible.”

Dick Dadey, executive director of Citizens Union said, “The Governor is trying to broker a solution that can win support in the Senate, but this solution doesn't adequately address the problem; in fact it makes it worse. Asking the private sector to assume the increased costs of maintaining the transit system used by all is going down the wrong track. It could set a dangerous precedent for all future efforts to increase taxes to pay for services. CU affirms its commitment to adopting a plan that is comprehensive in addressing the need and spreads the unfortunate but necessary burden among all shareholders.”

“Action delayed is action denied. It's Governor Paterson's job to keep New York's economy on the right track, and if he shirks his duty, New York will suffer the consequences,” said Paul Steely White, executive director, Transportation Alternatives.

“Governor Paterson is taking the wrong track by abandoning the long-term capital needs of the MTA,” said Kate Slevin, executive director of the Tri-State Transportation Campaign. “If the capital needs of the MTA are not addressed, the service and safety of the transit will start spiraling downward. We urge our leaders in Albany to make the tough choices necessary to address the MTA's capital and operating needs in tandem.”

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Members of the Empire State Transportation Alliance include: Regional Plan Association, NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign, General Contractors Association of New York, Environmental Defense Action Fund, Tri-State Transportation Campaign, New York State Laborers', ACEC New York, Citizens Union Foundation, Campaign for New York's Future, Construction Industry Council of New York, Long Island Contractor's Association, Natural Resources Defense Council, New York State Building and Construction Trades Council, New York League of Conservation Voters, Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to MTA, Transportation Alternatives.