

**ACHIEVING PlanNYC2030'S SUSTAINABILITY GOAL TO IMPROVE
TRAVEL TIMES BY ADDING TRANSIT CAPACITY**

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION**

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Good morning. Thank you Chairman Liu and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify today.

The Partnership for New York City represents the city's business leadership and its largest private sector employers. Working together with government, labor and other nonprofit organizations, our mission is to maintain New York's position as the leading world city.

Late last year, the Partnership published a major study on the need for traffic relief and transit improvements in New York. The Partnership's traffic and transit study provides the first evidence of the huge cost that traffic congestion imposes on the businesses and residents of the Metropolitan Region. We were able to identify more than \$13 billion a year in losses to the regional economy and up to 52,000 jobs that are not being created every year because of traffic congestion. We also found that congestion throughout the region has passed the "tipping point" - that is, the point at which heavy traffic no longer contributes to a vibrant, healthy economy but is essentially destroying economic activity because it causes delay, inefficiency and increases the costs of living and doing business in New York. Today, 48 percent of traffic congestion in our region is excess or destructive congestion. This cannot be sustained.

The primary source of traffic congestion throughout the region is the concentration of economic activity in the 8.5 square miles of the city that comprise Manhattan between 60th Street and the Battery. Every weekday, more than 3.6 million people enter Manhattan's Central Business Districts, traveling from every corner of the region. Two-thirds come by mass transit, but the rest come by private car. For many people, there is no efficient option other than a car because they come from locations in the region that are not adequately served by mass transit or the transit services that exist are so slow and inefficient that they are practically useless.

The Federal Department of Transportation has published an invitation for cities to apply for federal funding to pay for a comprehensive feasibility study for a traffic relief and transit improvement program. For the five cities that are selected for funding, federal money is also available to support expansion of the existing transit system. This could expedite and help finance plans for additional capacity throughout the City's transit system.

There are a number of options for transit improvement and traffic relief that the city needs to explore, as quickly as possible, including Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) systems and the expanded use of ferries. Every day we delay further studying and implementing various alternatives, New Yorkers are losing time and money.

Transportation officials are currently examining Bus Rapid Transit, which provides exclusive bus lanes, right of way, and the ability to control traffic signals. Cities in Europe, North America, South America and Australia have built BRT systems with a high degree of success over the last decade. The use of separate, dedicated roads, high occupancy vehicle lanes and automated curb-guided, and electronically guided, buses has resulted in tremendous increases in efficiency, turning buses into a viable alternative for commuters. The Partnership supports the city's pilot project, which is testing the introduction of BRT in New York.

New York City's waterways are an underutilized resource when it comes to public transit in this city. New York City's Economic Development Corporation, along with other agencies, groups and stakeholders have recommended initiatives that would expand private ferry services and connect Manhattan with other locations in the metropolitan region.

Plans for expanded ferry service, while also integrating ferry service with existing transit options, can be incorporated in all major waterfront development projects in the region. In addition, further feasibility studies should be carried out on the potential to serve more suburbs and the airports. Because ferry trips help reduce the volume of traffic trying to use the region's congested highways, tunnels and bridges, expanded ferry service could help relieve congestion at all entryways to Manhattan. The comparatively low capital costs of introducing new ferry service is far more attractive than building new fixed crossings, and ferries are one of the few transportation improvements that leverage private sources of capital in an effort to help relieve congestion around the region.

To provide for the stability of an expanding ferry service, the optimal solution is for the MTA to manage the ferry system so that it receives the level of service and maintenance of the other key transportation systems. Under public

management, certain commuter ferry routes might qualify for operating subsidies and could be integrated with the bus, subway and commuter rail services of the region.

The current Five Year Capital Plan of the Metropolitan Transit Authority includes significant system expansion projects. New Jersey is pursuing a new commuter rail tunnel under the Hudson River. New and expanded commuter rail services and roadways to accommodate commuters to the growing labor market on Long Island and in Westchester are also being planned.

Additional needs, such as parking facilities at New Jersey commuter rail stations and New York City subway stations that accommodate non-residents on a park-and-ride basis have also been identified. New York City buses, including “express” buses, remain a limited and unreliable option for areas of the city not served by subways.

As we compete internationally for the world’s best and brightest, a sub-par transportation network cannot hamper New York. Traditional infrastructure expansions are in the works, but will not address the needs of the one million new residents and 750,000 new jobs the city expects over the next 25 years. There is time, if we begin work now, to address these problems creatively and in a manner that will sustain any future growth. We look forward to continuing our work with this Committee and the entire Council to address the needs of our fast growing city and achieve sustainability by 2030.