

Policy Proposal: Expand Public Transit

Published: April 11, 2026

Public transportation is cheaper, safer, and more environmentally friendly than traveling by car. It also generates massive economic benefits for our communities and our country. We need to invest substantially more in improving the quality and quantity of our public transit.

Is it true that as a kid you made your parents ride all the subway lines from end to end as a weekend activity?

I did and I won't apologize for it. The subway is awesome.

Why is public transit so great?

A few of the many reasons:

- Public transit is cost-effective:
 - o A household can save >\$13,000 per year by using public transit instead of driving
 - o The average household spends 16 cents of every dollar on transportation, with 93% of that going to buying, maintaining, and operating cars – the largest expenditure after housing
- Public transit is safe:
 - o Traveling by public transportation is 10x safer per mile than traveling by car
 - o You can reduce your chance of being in an accident by >90% by switching to public transit
- Public transportation is good for the environment:
 - o 6 billion gallons of gas are saved each year by using public transportation
 - o CO2 emissions are reduced by 55% by switching to public transit from a car
 - o Communities that invest in public transit reduce the US' carbon emissions by 63 million metric tons annually
- Public transit helps address issues of community equity:
 - o 55% of transit riders nationally earn <\$50k per year
- Public transportation creates material economic benefits:
 - o 450,000+ people work for public transportation agencies
 - o Every \$1 invested in public transit delivers \$5 in long-term economic returns

- Every \$1 billion invested in public transit creates or sustains 41,000 jobs and generates \$251 million in tax revenue
- 77% of federal transit funding flows to American companies and workers in the private sector – in total, public transit supports 3,000 suppliers in >1,700 communities across all 50 states.

Whether going to work, to school, to the doctor, or shopping, public transportation is an essential means of getting people from one point to another. Working families, students, seniors, people with disabilities...people from all walks of life rely on public transit to move around. (And those who still drive get less congestion as a result).

As the largest city in the country, NYC should be a leading example for how public transportation can/should work, yes?

It should be. But we've got a way to go to get there.

Buses serve communities across the city that lack convenient subway access and yet they travel an average of only 8 miles per hour.

The famed NYC subway has many positive attributes, but its on-time performance is still poor relative to other major cities. And only ~30% of subway stations are accessible – stranding not only New Yorkers with disabilities but also those, like me, who often have a stroller with them.

How can NYC do better?

Very briefly: reduce construction costs (much higher than global averages, means little new gets built), add more busways (one means of increasing bus speed), expand the Fair Fares program (increase eligibility and introduce auto-enrollment), and streamline elevator construction (to reach full accessibility on a reasonable timeline).

The end results we should target:

- Busway or BRT stop, regional rail station, or subway station within ½ mile of every New York City resident
- All stations should be accessible
- Doubling average bus speeds
- Six-minute service + 95%+ on-time performance for subways



But that's mostly beyond the purview of federal officials.

Oh right, you're running for Congress. What does the federal government have to do with all of this?

The MTA's 2025-2029 Capital Plan includes an expected \$14 billion of federal contributions – over 20% of the total expected funding in the plan.

An increase in federal contributions could mean achieving more, faster. A decrease in federal funding would jeopardize the existing plan.

As a reminder, some of what that capital plan would achieve:

- Ordering 2,000 new railcars to reduce delays (new cars are 6x more reliable)
- Installing >75 miles of modern signals to improve reliability and frequency
- Start building the Interborough Express
- Make at least 60 more subway stations accessible

The Interborough Express (IBX) – that's largely going to be in NY-9, right?

It is!

As a reminder, the IBX will be the first new end-to-end rapid transit built entirely within NYC since the G train opened in 1937. IBX stations built in Brooklyn will be the first transit stations built in the borough since the A line extended to Euclid Ave in 1948.

The IBX corridor is home to 900,000 residents and 260,000 workers – 50% of households along the corridor don't own a car, 19% of corridor residents are below the poverty line, and almost 75% of corridor residents are people of color.

Projected to serve 40 million riders annually, the IBX will transform transportation for people across NY-9.

So what else can Congress do to help expand public transportation?



Congress should provide public transportation with at least as much funding as it does for highways (currently the split is 80-20 in favor of highways).

The federal transportation program will fund up to 80-90% of a road project but only up to 50% of a transit project; that needs to end.

Congress can also provide public transit agencies with additional support, increase funding for procuring no- and low-emission buses, reform and expand the Capital Investment Grant program (supporting local communities that are expanding/building new public transit systems), and require states to develop equitable TOD plans (locating housing and commercial development around planned/existing transit stations).

NY-9 consistently receives less federal funding than almost every surrounding district – because we have ineffective representation. Continuing that trend threatens the ability to build much-needed public transit expansion in our communities – from the IBX to increased express bus service and station accessibility improvements.



Sources include:

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