



March 29, 2012

Honorable William J. Lindsay
991 Main Street, Suite 103
Holbrook, New York 11741

Re: New York State Budget and Suffolk County Transit

Dear Presiding Officer Lindsay,

The Tri-State Transportation Campaign, a non-profit transportation policy watchdog working in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, writes to urge you to use new funding support for transit operations to expand Suffolk County Transit service to Sundays.

The recently adopted New York State budget includes an additional \$1.5 million in State Transportation Operating Assistance (STOA) for Suffolk County. This additional subsidy, in tandem with the \$1 million expected to be generated through scheduled fare increases in May, offer Suffolk County an opportunity to expand bus service on the majority of its routes to seven days a week. This would be an unprecedented expansion of transit service in Suffolk County, and a sharp contrast to the trend of service cuts that are occurring elsewhere in the region. Building upon the, by all accounts, successful pilot program for Sunday service would help continue the trend of increased bus ridership in Suffolk County. From 2000-2010, Suffolk County bus ridership increased by almost 45%.

Recognizing that fares have not been raised in two decades, Tri-State has not opposed the fare hike proposal, but we do believe that riders should get something more for their money, especially since the 22,500 people who ride Suffolk County Transit every day make, on average, \$20,000 less than commuters who drive to work alone. Expansion of service to the majority of Sunday routes would allow riders to get more for their increased transportation costs.

While we understand that Suffolk County is facing fiscal uncertainty, we urge you to not use this new funding to fill the County's budget deficit. Doing so could take even more dollars out of the economy. According to the American Public Transportation Association, every dollar invested in transit operating aid creates more than three dollars in the local economy, generating much needed tax revenue in the process.

We urge you to support legislation to dedicate this new STOA funding to transit operations, while also maintaining Suffolk County's existing contribution to the Suffolk County Transit system. Thank you for your time, and please do not hesitate to contact me at (631) 742-7528 or rlynch@tstc.org if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Ryan Lynch
Policy Director