

June 28, 2017

Governor Andrew Cuomo
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

As you gather participants for the upcoming MTA Genius Competition for new ideas to fix the subways, we write on behalf of eight million daily transit riders in New York to share our *Subway Success Matrix*: the criteria that riders will use to evaluate proposals to resolve our public transit crisis.

We appreciate your search for good ideas to improve our transit system, but at its core the “genius” required to fix New York City transit is a political one: marshaling existing knowledge, unleashing the existing talent which is stifled by current organizational norms, and then bolstering that latent human capital with fresh financial capital. New York’s obstacles are not purely technological: the technology exists in London, Paris, Hong Kong and elsewhere to bring old systems into the modern era, much of it already specified in the MTA’s capital plan but with an absurdly long time horizon. New York’s obstacles are not purely fiscal, either: we have underinvested in transit, but we are a resourceful city in a resourceful nation. Our challenge is a political one, of putting technology and money to effective use.

To that end, we share here our *Subway Success Matrix*: the criteria that riders will use to judge any proposal to fix public transit. In order to serve riders, a plan must:

- 1) Restore reliable service.** A successful plan will address widespread breakdowns and delays, which have skyrocketed in recent years. Riders should be able to leave home in the morning knowing that they will arrive on time to work.
- 2) Expand capacity of our existing system.** While many delays are caused by crowding, that crowding is the result of underinvestment in public transit, which has not kept pace with the number of people who depend on our subways today. A successful plan will help public transit carry more people safely and comfortably, particularly at rush hour, so that riders won’t have to let trains go by or cram themselves onto packed trains.
- 3) Include short-term fixes and a long-term vision.** Some changes will take years to enact; others can be done today with changes to MTA operations and service. A successful plan will build for the future while recognizing that riders need emergency relief now, and will communicate a vision for both.

- 4) **Communicate better with riders.** A significant amount of rider frustration during delays is the result of poor communication from the MTA, which leaves straphangers unsure of when the delay will be resolved and what travel alternatives are available. Any plan for fixing the subways must include steps to improve communication when delays inevitably occur.
- 5) **Improve access for all.** The current crisis is an opportunity to rectify the MTA's barriers to access for people with disabilities, seniors, and people traveling with young children.

The solutions to rescue New York City Transit from its precipitous decline are all around us, screaming out from the many previous reports, plans and prescriptions from talented agency staff and advocates who work on transit issues. We know that a credible plan will include a modern control system to replace 80-year-old signal technology; new subway cars that carry more people and break down less often; more elevators and escalators that are reliable and clean; and real-time information available at stations, stops and online that will help riders make informed travel plans. Additionally, turning around the MTA's failing bus system, as we advocated with detailed solutions, not only helps bus riders but can also take pressure off the subway in some corridors.

Only the Governor can marshal the resources necessary to invest in lasting solutions and turn the MTA into an organization where existing ideas can more rapidly take root and flourish. In order to realistically achieve the goals outlined above, we need your leadership to:

- **Reform the MTA's capital construction process.** Current timelines for modernizing the MTA's most basic operating equipment anticipate decades of work for upgrades that other global capitals such as London and Paris have already made. Construction costs routinely balloon, sometimes reaching multiples of a project's original plan, and timelines are continually extended. The MTA has creative, quality employees who are looking to take on these core challenges for the agency—we need your leadership to establish a reform mandate and empower the people who can accomplish it.
- **Identify a fair and sustainable funding source to fix public transit.** New York must make up for decades of underinvestment in mass transit, and there is no way to fix it on the cheap. Today, the State continues to step away from its commitment to fund public transit, most recently stripping \$65 million from a recurring annual revenue source that helped pay for MTA operations. Only the State has the legal authority to raise new revenue to support public transit, for example by implementing the Move NY Fair Plan to adjust bridge tolls, expanding an income tax surcharge or imposing a carbon tax that could also reduce emissions. A credible plan to fix transit will come with a price tag, and a fair and sustainable way to pay for it.

We look with interest at the MTA Genius Competition and we always welcome new ideas. But the core problem facing transit riders isn't a lack of ideas; it's a lack of leadership, and a lack of political will to tackle the transit system's greatest challenges.

Riders need an ambitious, credible plan to address the state of crisis in the New York City transit system, and we need an investment of your time, energy and leadership to carry it through. As

you construct a plan for how to fix the subway, we urge you to consider our *Subway Success Matrix* outlined above. Millions of frustrated subway and bus riders will evaluate your plan, and your leadership, accordingly.

Best,



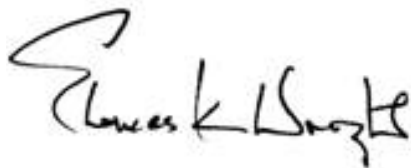
David Bragdon
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