



December 17, 2008

(Individual letters sent to Governor, Mayor, State & City Legislative Leaders)

The Women's City Club of New York is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that has shaped public policy in areas of contemporary concern since 1915. As members of the Campaign for New York's Future, we are working with many other concerned New Yorkers to ensure a long-term sustainable future for our City.

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The Women's City Club recognizes the critical role played by public transit in maintaining the economic vitality of our region and the well-being of its residents, and concurs that decisive action is required by the City Council, the State Legislature, the Mayor and the Governor in order to maintain adequate service levels, prevent further deterioration of MTA facilities and provide for completion of critical capital projects.

We applaud the Ravitch Commission's proposals to increase the transparency and accountability of the MTA, to strengthen governance and to improve management of capital projects. We strongly support the tolling of the East River and Harlem River bridges, with the revenues to be used to maintain the bridges and improve mass transit, and we concur that bus service should be improved throughout the region.

While we recognize that State and local taxes are a significant burden on the commercial sector, we support the imposition of the proposed Mobility Tax, which appropriately spreads the burden of maintaining the regional transit system to those who rely on it for the success of their enterprises, whether or not they personally utilize its facilities. We also support the concept of a "lockbox" to ensure that these tax revenues, new borrowings, and capital-related expenditures are appropriately segregated and disclosed. However, we would require more information on the rationale, operations and oversight of the proposed MTA Capital Finance Authority before we could endorse the creation of yet another New York public authority.

Our major concern with the Commission proposal is with the provision for what would be essentially automatic bi-annual fare increases at the rate of inflation. Although we appreciate the difficulty of the current politically-charged fare-setting process for all involved, the Commission's proposal would in effect accept the current base of operating expenditures, which the report itself indicates reflects certain suboptimal management practices, and would dampen any incentive to exploit new technologies or otherwise improve productivity in the future.

Overall, the Women's City Club supports the Ravitch Commission's broad-based, multi-pronged approach, which we agree is necessary to ensure that the ultimate burden of funding the region's mass transit system is appropriately spread to all New Yorkers, across all neighborhoods and economic levels, to both residents and businesses throughout the region that benefit from its capabilities.

We appreciate your consideration of our views on this critically important issue.

Sincerely,

Ruth E. Acker
President

Joan S. Freilich
Chair, Infrastructure Committee