

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 1, 2024

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul,

As Members of New York City's Congressional Delegation, we respectfully request your support for expanding the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's (MTA) Fare-Free Bus Pilot in the final Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 state budget. This pilot launched one fare-free bus route in each borough through last year's state budget, finally introducing New York to the economic and social benefits of free public transit. To bring these benefits to more communities, we ask you to support appropriations in the final state budget of \$45 million to expand this crucial pilot and \$45 million to expand bus service reliability and frequency.

According to the MTA, the purpose of the pilot is to study how fare-free service affects ridership, access, equity, and fare evasion. And while the study has not yet concluded, reports indicate not only strong support for fare-free service expansion, but also increased ridership under the program. Millions of New Yorkers and visitors rely on the MTA to access economic and educational opportunity. An expansion of the Fare-Free Bus Pilot with additional routes will give the MTA a more wholistic understanding of fare-free transit's benefits in New York.

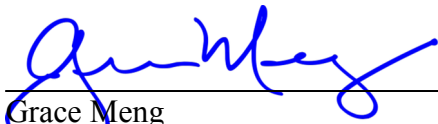
In addition to the MTA's study, there are already proven models for fare-free service and its benefit to ridership and equity throughout the country. In Boston, Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) instituted a four year-long fare-free bus program in 2022 that increased ridership to roughly 16 percent from pre-pandemic levels in the program's first year. This encouraging result should instill confidence that expanding the MTA's pilot program is a sound investment in our city.

Most importantly, expanding this pilot program is an investment in a more equitable public transit system. Giving New Yorkers more free bus routes will increase the dynamism of our communities and reduce the financial burden of accessing transit for low-and-middle-income New Yorkers. At the same time, this program makes our city more affordable and more connected. That is why we encourage this crucial investment in the MTA's Fare-Free Bus Pilot in the final FY 2025 budget.

Finally, we request \$45 million to increase frequency and improve reliability of MTA buses, which are currently the [slowest in the nation](#). New Yorkers deserve not just more affordable transit, but higher quality transit as well.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact Tom Dinegar (Tom.Dinegar@mail.house.gov) of Representative Grace Meng's staff.

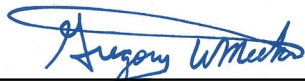
Sincerely,



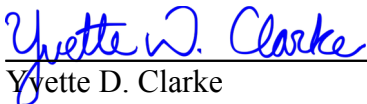
Grace Meng
Member of Congress



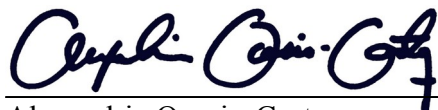
Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.
Member of Congress



Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress



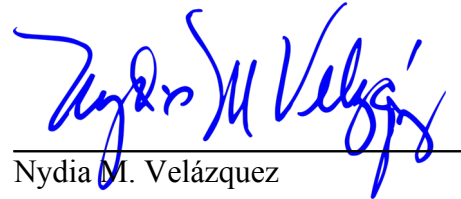
Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress



Dan Goldman
Member of Congress



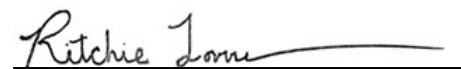
Nydia M. Velázquez
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Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress



Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress