

STATE OF NEW YORK

4421

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

February 4, 2025

Introduced by Sen. GIANARIS -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Transportation

AN ACT to amend the public authorities law, in relation to enacting the "Make Transit Affordable Act"

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. Short title. This act shall be known and may be cited as
2 the "Make Transit Affordable Act".

3 § 2. Legislative findings and intent. The legislature hereby finds and
4 declares the importance of the New York Metropolitan Transportation
5 Authority (MTA) and affirms the duty of the legislature to ensure that
6 the MTA remains affordable. The MTA provides an essential service:
7 transporting millions of New Yorkers on billions of trips each year to
8 and from places of work, worship, and gathering. For many New Yorkers,
9 however, the cost is prohibitive, especially as inflation climbs and
10 wages remain stagnant. Given these conditions, the legislature must
11 provide enough funding to offset an assumed 2025 fare hike, particularly
12 on the subways and buses, the heart of New York City's transit system.
13 As the MTA begins to implement congestion pricing, it has never been
14 more important to promote public transit as a truly viable alternative
15 to vehicular transport. To that end, the state of New York must fund a
16 second, more expansive fare-free bus pilot program, building on the
17 success of the 2023-2024 pilot program. It is the intent of the legisla-
18 ture to include \$205,000,000 in additional appropriations in the SFY26
19 budget to Make Transit Affordable by providing an expanded, world-class
20 free bus pilot program and preventing a fare increase on subways and
21 buses.

22 § 3. The public authorities law is amended by adding a new section
23 1266-n to read as follows:

24 § 1266-n. Fare-free bus pilot program. Subject to appropriation, the
25 authority shall allocate forty-five million dollars in state funds

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 received to expand the fare-free bus pilot program within the city of
2 New York.

3 1. The fare-free bus pilot program expansion shall last for at least
4 one year.

5 2. The fare-free bus pilot program expansion shall consist of at least
6 fifteen new fare-free bus routes and shall cost no more than forty-five
7 million dollars in net operating costs. Net operating costs shall be
8 determined by the total costs of implementing the fare-free bus pilot
9 program expansion and shall not accrue to the city of New York.

10 3. The fare-free bus routes included in the fare-free bus pilot
11 program expansion shall be selected by the authority, and may include
12 either New York City Transit Authority or MTA bus routes, provided that
13 there shall be at least three new fare-free bus routes within each of
14 the following counties: Bronx county, Kings county, New York county,
15 Queens county, Richmond county.

16 4. The factors considered by the authority in selecting such fare-free
17 bus routes shall include but not be limited to:

18 (a) addressing service adequacy and equity for low-income and econom-
19 ically disadvantaged communities;

20 (b) access to employment and commercial activity in areas served by
21 such fare-free routes; and

22 (c) addressing routes facing high rates of operator assaults.

23 5. The routes selected shall rank in the top twenty-five percent of
24 ridership for the given borough.

25 6. Thirty days prior to the implementation of the fare-free bus pilot
26 program expansion, the authority shall provide a report to each member
27 of the state legislature justifying the authority's choice of fare-free
28 bus routes, according to the criteria in subdivision four of this
29 section and any additional criteria specified by the authority.

30 7. The authority shall report to its board on the fare-free bus pilot
31 program expansion after it has been in effect for three months, six
32 months, and again upon the conclusion of the fare-free bus pilot program
33 expansion. Such reports shall also be sent to the governor and every
34 member of the state legislature and shall include, but not be limited
35 to, the following comparative performance metrics:

36 (a) ridership totals relative to equivalent time periods before the
37 fare-free bus pilot program expansion took effect;

38 (b) percent of scheduled service delivered;

39 (c) average end-to-end bus speed changes;

40 (d) customer journey time performance;

41 (e) dwell time at bus stops;

42 (f) the cost to provide such service itemized by route;

43 (g) scheduled service frequency; and

44 (h) data on bus operator assaults per fare-free route in comparison
45 with system wide.

46 8. The authority shall also survey riders on the fare-free routes, by
47 in-person methods at the three-, six- and twelve-month marks on topics
48 including but not limited to:

49 (a) overall rider satisfaction;

50 (b) experience of security and safety when riding the fare-free bus;

51 (c) demographic information including annual income, vehicle access,
52 race and ethnicity, disability status, age, and enrollment status in the
53 fair-fares program; and

54 (d) open-ended questions such as how fare-free buses at the point of
55 service have impacted the rider.

1 9. The authority shall implement all-door boarding on all fare-free
2 buses beginning the first day of the fare-free bus pilot program expan-
3 sion.

4 10. The authority shall promote the fare-free routes through the
5 following methods at a minimum: signage on buses, signage at bus stops,
6 intersecting subway stops, announcement on the authority "fares & tolls"
7 webpage, digital advertisements on subways, and across MTA social media
8 accounts. Any messaging promoting the fare-free routes shall also
9 include messaging reminding riders that such program is on select routes
10 and that such riders should treat their bus operators with respect and
11 decorum.

12 11. The authority shall present the fare-free bus pilot program expan-
13 sion to its board for approval no later than sixty days after the effec-
14 tive date of this section, for implementation no later than ninety days
15 after board adoption.

16 § 4. Subject to appropriation, the metropolitan transportation author-
17 ity shall allocate \$160,000,000 annually in state funds to offset an
18 elimination of the forthcoming four percent fare increase on subways and
19 buses as contemplated in the metropolitan transportation authority's
20 2024 November Financial Plan.

21 § 5. This act shall take effect immediately.