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August 26, 2015

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August 21, 2015

Enough Already -- Fund the MTA Capital Plan

by Steven C.F. Anderson, Michael Locker and Joyce Miller

Recently the New York state legislative session ended without the funding of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's desperately needed capital plan. What a shame.

The MTA is a lifeline for the 8.6 million New Yorkers who rely on it every day to go to work, get to school, or obtain health care, food and shelter; in short, to live.

The upkeep, integrity, safety and functionality of the MTA affect all New Yorkers. Without the MTA, our economy, upstate and downstate, would simply not be solvent. A large percentage of state revenue can be attributed

to the profits, jobs and taxes generated by the transit system. That revenue translates into critical funding and services that benefit every New Yorker.

Currently that system, so essential to our economy and our citizens, is failing and in crisis. The MTA's enormous debt-more than \$20 billion-is larger than that of many nations.

At the same time, its infrastructure is crumbling. To overcome this crisis the legislature, Mayor Bill de Blasio and Gov. Andrew Cuomo must address both the need to pay down the debt while simultaneously investing in the MTA's present and future. This is impossible without a properly funded, well-conceived and fully-supported capital plan.

New York's commitment, or lack thereof, is a reflection of our state's priorities and an indicator of our future. According to the General Contractors Association of New York, 83% of subway stations are in poor repair, 37% of MTA's mainline signals have exceeded their useful life, and tunnels and bridges in dire need of repair are too numerous to name. Simply fixing the system, debt aside, requires a serious capital investment. Completing projects conceived to improve the current system-including the long-awaited Second Avenue subway-requires, at the very least, the funding of the five-year capital plan approved by the MTA board of directors.

Again, this is not merely a matter of transportation, safety or convenience. The 2010-2014 capital program generated 350,000 jobs and \$44 billion for New York state. According to the New York Building Congress, the MTA alone accounts for 25% of New York's construction industry.

The governor is concerned about how to pay for the capital plan and does not want to raise taxes. This is understandable on both a political and practical level. However, it is absolutely necessary that the governor, mayor and legislature find a way to fund this plan.

Recently Mr. Cuomo proposed a framework for funding the capital plan that included a reduction of its budget by \$2 billion and a demand that the city contribute additional funds. We applaud the governor for putting forth a proposal and recognizing the importance of the capital plan. Still, while a bureaucratic tug-of-war between the city and Albany plays itself out, serious questions remain about how to close the funding gap without further relying on debt. Plenty of options have been suggested, including:

- The removal of payroll mobility tax exemptions, so more or all employers in the 12-county MTA service area would pay the tax.
- Using the \$4 billion New York received in bank settlement funds.
- Congestion pricing, such as a uniform toll for all auto users entering the Manhattan central business district.
- Lifting the cap on the state's gasoline tax and dedicating the revenues to transit and transportation.

There are no easy solutions, but being a member of the legislature, running a city, or governing a state is not an easy job. It does, however, require the effort and fortitude to face our most essential public-policy problems head-on, and to negotiate in good faith-not to procrastinate because it is convenient. For New York, for our future, and for ourselves we must demand that the governor, mayor and state legislature not rest until a MTA capital plan is passed.



Steve C.F. Anderson



Joyce Miller



Michael Locker

Steve C. F. Anderson is founder and managing director of ***InfrastructureUSA.org***. ***Joyce Miller*** is president and CEO of ***Tier One Public Strategies***. ***Michael Locker*** is founder and president of ***Locker Associates***. All are members of the ***Business and Labor Coalition of New York's Infrastructure Initiative Committee***.

'Can Our Transit System Get Any Worse?' - New York Times Op-Ed by RPA President Thomas K. Wright, [click **HERE**](#).

Cooperation is Necessary to Address New York's Infrastructure Crisis;
The BALCONY Infrastructure Initiative committee says consider Support of Senator Charles Schumer's Plan for a "Gateway Transportation Authority" to fund Hudson River Rail Tunnels.



Senator Charles Schumer

The Hudson River Rail Tunnels provide a vital lifeline for New Yorkers, commuters, and the State and region's economy. Yet when it comes to their upkeep and operation, even as they are crumbling before our very eyes, everyone is passing the buck. This is the message that Senator Charles Schumer delivered when he called on NJ and NY State to cooperate with the federal government, the Port Authority, MTA, and Amtrak under the umbrella of a single development corporation to fund the construction of two new tunnels under the Hudson before the existing tubes fail. The so-called "Gateway Transportation Authority" would additionally have control of operations and maintenance of the tunnels moving forward.

According to the Schumer, "Without a single agency directing traffic, Gateway could only move forward one inch at a time, grant-by-grant, undertaken by the separate agencies in a piecemeal fashion. That makes a project such as this, with so many moving parts-and a rigid chronology of construction-extraordinarily difficult...Input should come from all parties-everyone should have a seat at the table-but the planning and financing and implementation of Gateway should be

driven by one conductor: the development corporation."

While we are eager to see and consider the specifics of the Senator's plan we are glad that he recognizes and is attempting to address the urgent need to undertake this critical project as soon as possible and the necessity of the creation of a new paradigm for funding, construction, and operation of major infrastructure projects in New York; one that emphasizes shared responsibility and rejects procrastination based on politics and greed.

Aug. 18, 2015, NY Times Editorial, click [HERE](#).

Aug. 24, 2015, Governor Cuomo's letter to the editor (NY Times): Build a New Rail Tunnel: click [HERE](#).

About the BALCONY Infrastructure Initiative

The Business and Labor Coalition of New York (BALCONY) was founded in the spirit of achieving common sense, common ground solutions to the most pressing public policy issues confronting New Yorkers. Infrastructure is perhaps the most critical policy issue currently impacting the well-being of our citizenry and the future of our city and its economy. And it is in dire need of repair and restoration. Infrastructure affects all of us regardless of economic status - from work, housing, education, and public safety to the air we breathe and the water we drink. It cannot be ignored. And yet it is hugely underfunded and under-appreciated - only grabbing headlines in the wake of crises such as the collapse of a bridge, a train crash, a major storm, or a burst water main.

From crumbling, dangerous roads, bridges, subways and commuter rail, to outdated water, sewage, energy, and gas systems to overcrowded, deteriorating classrooms and hospitals, courtrooms and prisons, New York's infrastructure is woefully inadequate to meet current demands.

Recognizing that infrastructure is in crisis, and that this is an issue that equally affects both our business and labor members, **BALCONY** has decided to undertake an **Infrastructure Initiative**. Our initiative will mobilize our members, as well as advocates and experts, in an

innovative way to address the deplorable state of infrastructure in New York State and specifically in the New York City metro region. We will seek to raise civic awareness, explore solutions, and accomplish meaningful change in infrastructure funding and policy through public education, forums, media engagement, dialogue, lobbying, and legislation.

A concerted, sincere, and nonpartisan effort to repair and modernize our infrastructure so that it is functional and up to date, is a necessity that cannot wait and requires the efforts and cooperation of government, business, contractors, building trade unions, advocates, experts, and our elected officials. **We hope you will join us!!!**



BALCONY founder **Alan Lubin** named
NYSUT Executive Vice President Emeritus.

ALBANY, N.Y. Aug. 24, 2015 - **Alan B. Lubin**, who directed New York State United Teachers' legislative and political action operations for nearly 17 years and spearheaded innumerable legislative successes, has been named NYSUT executive vice president emeritus.

NYSUT's Board of Directors recently honored Lubin, a resident of Clifton Park, in recognition of his more than 45 years in leadership roles in the 600,000-member union.

"Alan Lubin is a towering figure in NYSUT's history. For nearly a half century, he has stood as a strong voice for working people and social justice in the halls of the Capitol and a fighter for equal opportunity for every child in classrooms across New York state," said **NYSUT President Karen E. Magee**. "He is incredibly deserving of this honor."

NYSUT Executive Vice President Andrew Pallotta, who succeeded Lubin in January 2010, said, "When he served as NYSUT executive VP, everyone at the Capitol knew Alan and respected Alan. And, no matter what side of an issue they were on, everyone liked Alan because he is knowledgeable, humble and generous with his time and attention. He is a giant in the history of the UFT, of NYSUT and teacher unionism nationally."

Lubin served in leadership roles at NYSUT's largest affiliate, the United Federation of Teachers, from 1967 until his election as a statewide officer in 1993. His accomplishments as executive vice president included passage of a Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) that helped protect public employee pensions from inflation; record school aid increases; and enactment in 2002 of a law requiring schools to be equipped with Automated External Defibrillators. School defibrillators have been credited with saving dozens of lives in schools and on athletic fields across the state. Lubin, who is also a co-founder of the Business and Labor Coalition of New York (**BALCONY**), remains active in union issues and is on the board of the New York Rural and Migrant Ministry and other social justice groups.

"This is a tremendous honor. I am proud to have worked my entire career to give teachers and other education professionals a real voice in the workplace, and to fight hard for those whose voices would not be heard without strong representation," Lubin said.

New York State United Teachers is a statewide union with more than 600,000 members in education, human services and health care. NYSUT is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association and the AFL-CIO.