February 10, 2015

Thomas F. Prendergast, Chairman and CEO  Polly Trottenberg, Commissioner
Metropolitan Transportation Authority  NYC Department of Transportation
2 Broadway  55 Water Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10004  New York, NY 10004

Dear Chairman Prendergast and Commissioner Trottenberg,

The Progressive Caucus believes Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) has the potential to be a game changer for millions of New Yorkers who rely on public transportation every day. We urge you to prioritize bringing full-featured BRT to New York City because of its unique ability to address a number of critical issues facing low income and communities of color.

BRT needs to be an integral part of New York’s transit infrastructure because:

- **Transit access is not equal across all neighborhoods in New York City.** Data reveals that low-income and communities of color are subject to disproportionately longer commute times than their more affluent and Caucasian counterparts.

- **Job growth is in the outer boroughs, but these locations are the least well-served by the current transit system.** Throughout the recession and the slow recovery, outer borough job addition has dramatically outpaced gains in Manhattan. Blue collar jobs in manufacturing, construction, and domestic work are increasingly located in the boroughs, as are new jobs for our city’s working class, in areas such as healthcare, education, and retail. A Manhattan-centered rapid transit system that was developed in the first half of the 20th century is not equipped to serve this new reality.

- **Patterns of displacement have further reduced access to faster transit options for lower income families and communities of color.** With the increased polarization of New York’s economy and large scale, high-profile developments, neighborhoods that were once affordable to low- and moderate-income families have been completely transformed. Working class families have been pushed farther from the city’s core and from rapid transit access. These commuters now rely on local buses for at least part of their journey – the slowest, least dependable mode of transit – or trade-off other necessities in order to endure the costs of car ownership.
The impact of these transit deserts amplifies inequality; reducing employment opportunities, and restricting access to education, healthcare and other services for the working class. It also reduces opportunities for parent engagement in schools and the civic engagement vital to our democracy.

The physical and demographic patterns of the city have changed and the transit system is not changing with it fast enough to ensure equal access.

A realistic, cost-efficient and comparatively quick way to address many of these issues is through the creation of a network of full-featured BRT routes that connect boroughs and neighborhoods to blue collar job centers, and create options for fast transit that were previously unimaginable.

Building on the successes of the Select Bus Service program, full-featured BRT is a cost-effective, efficient way of making more equitable, just, and sustainable.

We applaud the de Blasio administration and MTA for embracing the need for full-featured BRT. The $90 million committed to DOT for BRT in last year’s budget represents a significant down payment on a citywide network. We would like to meet with you and your staff to discuss ways the Progressive Caucus can help bring a network of BRT routes to New York City.

Sincerely,

New York City Council Progressive Caucus

Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez  Council Member Donovan Richards
Chair, Committee on Transportation  Co-Chair, District 31 – Queens

Council Member Antonio Reynoso  Council Member Brad Lander
Co-Chair, District 34 – Brooklyn and Queens  District 39 – Brooklyn

Council Member Margaret Chin  Council Member Ben Kallos
Treasurer, District 1 – Manhattan  Vice-Chair for Policy, District 5 – Manhattan
Council Member Helen Rosenthal
Vice-Chair for Budget, District 6 – Manhattan

Council Member Danny Dromm
District 25 – Queens

Council Member Corey Johnson
District 3 – Manhattan

Council Member Julissa Ferreras
District 21 – Queens

Council Member I. Daneek Miller
District 27 – Queens

Council Member Carlos Menchaca
District 38 – Brooklyn

Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer
Majority Leader, District 26 – Queens

Council Member Stephen Levin
District 33 – Brooklyn

Council Member Debi Rose
District 49 – Staten Island

Council Member Ritchie Torres.
District 15 – Bronx

Council Member Mark Levine
District 7 – Manhattan