



July 11th, 2019

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
Executive Chamber
New York State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

We write to express our strong support for piloting and implementing microtransit initiatives on Staten Island. As the MTA looks to improve transportation across the New York metropolitan area, it is critical that “transit deserts” such as Staten Island be prioritized along with the more central boroughs. Staten Island’s unique characteristics make it an appealing site to implement microtransit, which can connect Staten Islanders to existing mass transit systems, boost MTA ridership, take cars off the road, and reduce commute times for New Yorkers across the City.

We recognize the work already being done to improve mass transit on Staten Island, such as the North Shore Bus Rapid Transit project, and the current study of West Shore transportation alternatives. However, Staten Islanders can’t wait years for these projects to improve our commutes. Additionally, while the recently completed express bus redesign and forthcoming local bus redesign promise to improve Staten Island’s dominant mode of transportation, the fixed nature of these systems means that bus stops will remain inaccessible for some commuters. To increase accessibility of existing systems and maximize future planned investments, microtransit should be used to connect riders to mass transit on Staten Island in a complementary fashion.

Bridging the distance between peoples’ houses and the nearest mass transit stop—the classic “first mile/last mile” problem—remains the dominant challenge on Staten Island. Walking more than a few blocks is simply not realistic for commuters, and many Staten Islanders drive to the nearest transit hub and park nearby, thereby putting more cars on the road during rush hour and taking up street parking in central areas. Many Staten Islanders forgo mass transit entirely, with 68 percent driving to and from work each day, facing high tolls, maddening congestion, and some of the longest commutes in the country. It is essential to implement innovative solutions that can finally give Staten Islanders a credible option between driving and mass transit.

Microtransit can connect commuters to mass transit in ways that are inefficient using conventional public systems. One successful program in Seattle has used internet-enabled minibuses to pick people up where they are rather than forcing them to walk or drive to the nearest stop. Dynamic routes adapt to real-time traffic and demand with lower operating costs and higher ridership. A similar approach could be adopted on Staten Island, wherein an MTA vehicle could pick up passengers who signal through their mobile phones and bring them to the nearest express bus, Staten Island Rail Road or Ferry terminal. This would allow Staten Islanders to get to their transit stop easily and efficiently, without having to use their private cars to do so.

We believe that Staten Island can be a testing ground for microtransit, which if successful can be implemented to address other “transit deserts” around New York City and the metropolitan area. Whereas Staten Island already leads the City in terms of bus ridership, and microtransit can expand access to existing bus lines,

microtransit can improve access to the subway in South Brooklyn, or provide alternate service when service is interrupted.

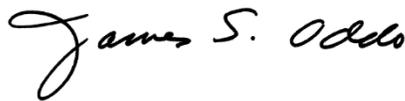
We recognize that microtransit will not replace traditional mass transit systems and should remain a supplementary service. For instance, along major corridors, fixed rail and bus systems continue to have far greater passenger capacity, and it will do little to help Staten Island commuters if microtransit puts dozens more minibuses on the streets in place of traditional buses. Rather, microtransit should aim to boost ridership on existing systems. Microtransit is not the panacea to Staten Island's transit woes, but it should be a part of a holistic treatment.

As the only borough not connected to the rest of New York City by subway, we must look towards innovative and creative solutions like microtransit to address our commuting nightmare. We look forward to collaborating with your Administration on this and other issues and thank you in advance for considering this proposal.

Sincerely,



Max Rose
United States Congress



James S. Oddo
Staten Island Borough President



Diane Savino
New York State Senate



Michael Cusick
New York State Assembly



Michael Reilly
New York State Assembly



Charles Fall
New York State Assembly



Joseph Borelli
New York City Council



Deborah Rose
New York City Council