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# MTA needs more revenue, not service cuts

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[Metropolitan Transportation Authority](#) Chairman [Patrick Foye](#) raised the specter of “service guideline adjustments”—service cuts—at the transit agency's August 16 emergency board meeting. We don't know what the reductions will look like, but we do know that cutting service on subways and buses is exactly the wrong thing to contemplate, despite the authority's budget woes.

Earlier this year transit advocates, business leaders, MTA leaders and elected officials banded together in support of [congestion pricing](#), with the successful campaign predicated on raising much-needed funds for New York City Transit President Andy Byford's Fast Forward plan. All signs point to nearly \$40 billion in capital funds being raised for new signals, tracks and subway cars and buses, with additional money going to support similar visions for the Long

Island Rail Road and Metro-North. Finally, a major, new dedicated funding stream was realized to support transit.

Unfortunately, no dedicated funding has been secured for operating the system—actually running the trains and buses. The annual shortfall is expected to balloon to almost \$1 billion by 2022, and the MTA is now looking to cut its way out of red tape—much as it did in 2010.

Nine years since those cuts, the city is still suffering their effects. While some of the service has been restored, we may never see another V train or restoration of lost Staten Island buses, and the M104 bus will likely never make the turn across 42nd Street to the [United Nations headquarters](#) from the Upper West Side. The MTA's own review of those cuts concluded: "Despite attempts to minimize negative impacts, the service reductions did result in certain customers losing access to transit service or experiencing a degradation in their service. When service cuts are driven by the need to reduce costs, such customer impacts are essentially unavoidable."

Impacts could be more widespread this time around. [Congestion pricing](#) aims to reduce vehicular travel in the central business district—easing congestion and improving air quality—by getting people out of cars and into transit. That means there has to be service to get people where they need to go. It's simple: if the service isn't there, the riders won't come. Why fund new signals when there are fewer trains to take advantage of them?

No, cutting service isn't the answer. The same political will that finally brought about congestion pricing is now needed to create a dedicated funding stream to operate the system. Raising the sales tax in the 12 MTA-served counties from 0.375% to 0.5% could raise \$1.3 billion over five years. Changing the gas sales tax from a [per-gallon charge](#) to 4% could bring in as much as \$2 billion over the same time period. (Sources and other funding options are available [here](#)).

Clearly, no one wants to raise taxes, but neither can we ignore the deleterious results of service cuts. New York and the surrounding region cannot afford to be caught in a transit death spiral. Our economy will suffer but riders will be the biggest losers.

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