



166A 22nd Street
Brooklyn, NY 11232 NYC-EJA.org

On the ground - and at the table

Testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Transportation Regarding the 2019 L train shutdown

December 14th, 2017

Good Morning Chairperson Ydanis Rodriguez, and Members of the City Council. My name is Renae Reynolds, and I am here to testify on behalf of the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance (NYC-EJA). Founded in 1991, NYC-EJA is a non-profit citywide membership network linking grassroots organizations from low-income neighborhoods and communities of color in their struggle for environmental justice. NYC-EJA empowers its member organizations to advocate for improved environmental conditions and against inequitable environmental burdens. Through our efforts, member organizations coalesce around specific common issues that threaten the ability of low-income and communities of color to thrive, and coordinate campaigns designed to affect City and State policies – including transportation policies that directly affect these communities.

I would like to thank Councilmember Rafael Espinal for sponsoring the resolution calling on Governor Cuomo and the MTA to commit to an expeditious transition from fossil fuel burning diesel buses to a modern Electric Bus Fleet.

Communities in North Brooklyn are overburdened by heavy vehicular traffic and the emissions they produce. When compared to the rest of Brooklyn and New York City as a whole, the neighborhoods of Williamsburg and Bushwick fare worse in asthma hospitalization rates across all age groups.

Overall increases in asthma prevalence are contributing to growing healthcare costs for New York employers, consumers, and taxpayers. As of 2014, asthma cost the United States \$56 billion a year in medical expenses, lost school and work days, and early deaths, [according to the CDC](#). [A report](#) from the New York Comptroller in 2014 shows that asthma costs New York a total of \$1.3 billion a year.

In 2016 we conducted a community survey in partnership with our member organization El Puento. We found that at certain intersections in North Brooklyn, up to 203 trucks passed through in a 1-hour period. That is a tremendous amount of heavy vehicular activity. Given this context, the response to approaching transit challenges should not be to swap one problem for another. The addition of 200 more diesel-burning buses would do just that, and would not bring us any closer to our Citywide goals of an 80% reduction in green house gas emissions by 2050 or 40% by 2030.



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We believe that the 2019 shut down of the L train presents an opportunity to act intentionally by devising a replacement strategy that would fill in the gaps in transit service and also be a part of a long term strategy for reducing vehicular emissions in our city. The City could save on mass transit expenditures while cleaning the air we breathe, reducing oil consumption, and reducing the amount of greenhouse gas emissions by investing in zero-emissions electric vehicle technology.

During Earth Week 2017 Governor Cuomo announced that the MTA would launch a pilot program with 5 Electric buses along the B32 and B39 lines. The MTA should provide updates to the public on the status of the EV pilot. Additionally, the MTA should consider expanding the amount of EV buses proposed in the pilot and find ways to integrate the pilot into the strategic plans for the L train replacement.

The MTA operates 5,700 buses, along 330 routes, making 16,000 stops and serves more than 2 million passengers daily. This is the largest fleet in the nation, which makes it a standard bearer for the US. While it may be tempting to evaluate the viability of investing in Electric Vehicles based on the initial costs of procurement, we must look at the cost savings across the entire life-cycle of the vehicle. Comptroller Scott Stringer recently released another report that cities like Vancouver, British Columbia, Los Angeles and Seattle have made commitments to exclusively purchase zero-emissions buses by 2025. We believe the MTA should also make similar commitments to reduce emissions, and to provide New Yorkers with transportation options that improve public health outcomes rather than worsen them.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.