

Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins
188 State Street
Legislative Office Building 907
Albany, NY 12247

Speaker Carl Heastie
188 State Street
Legislative Office Building 932
Albany, NY 12247

May 15th, 2024

Dear Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and Speaker Heastie,

We are urging you to bring A4120/S1981, sponsored by Assemblymember Karen McMahon and Senator Andrew Gounardes, respectively, to a vote before the end of this legislative session. As a diverse coalition of local legislators from across the state, we have seen the devastating physical, fiscal, and environmental impacts of continued investment in car-centric infrastructure. By passing **A4120/S1981**, we can direct our state's Department of Transportation (DOT) to reduce our state's car dependency and invest in greener and more accessible transit options across the state.

In recent years, Minnesota and [Colorado](#) have passed similar pieces of legislation that, just like A4120/S1891, direct their DOTs to cut Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) as part of transportation planning. In real terms, this means both departments factor in miles traveled by cars into infrastructure decisions and prioritize investments that reduce single occupancy vehicle mileage. This means projects that expanded cycling infrastructure, pedestrian walkways, and public transit were prioritized over outdated highway expansions and lane widening. With this policy change, Colorado was able to shift \$1.5 billion away from roadway expansions and into 5 Bus Rapid Transit Corridors and dozens of new bike, walk, and transit projects, bringing in [a net benefit of \\$40 billion](#) to residents. In Minnesota, planners project the new policy will reduce thousands of traffic fatalities, significantly reduce air pollution, and save the state almost [\\$90 billion](#) by 2050.

It's [estimated](#) that by cutting VMT by just 20% by 2050, New York could eliminate 227 million metric tons of carbon emissions as well as save the average household \$3,750 annually in gas and vehicle costs. Given that the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) commits our state to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 40% by 2030 and 85% by 2050, adopting this legislation is essential to meeting our critical

climate goals. Given the slow pace of electric vehicle rollouts across our country, we simply cannot rely on electrification alone to help us meet our climate goals.

Beyond the enormous financial and environmental impact of A4120/S1891, the 20% VMT cut proposed in this legislation will also save lives and prevent worsening segregation of communities across our state. For example, highway expansion projects have physically decimated historically black communities in [Rochester, Buffalo, Syracuse, and the Bronx](#), just to name a few. While federal infrastructure spending will help our state address racial inequities in our transit system, A4120/S1891 will ensure state DOT does not exacerbate them nor recreate them in other municipalities. Additionally, while traditional transportation planning has widened vehicle lanes to alleviate traffic, [study after study](#) has shown that larger roads attract more drivers, increase congestion, and worsen pollution. [Cutting vehicle miles traveled by just 20%](#) in New York would save nearly 6,000 lives each year as a result of fewer collisions and less air pollution.

There is no silver bullet to our state's transportation challenges, but we are united in the belief that investing solely in car-centric infrastructure will only exacerbate the problems we face. **By passing A4120/S1891, New York can ensure that the state DOT is focused on investing in accessible transit options, thereby saving thousands of lives and putting money back in the hands of working-class New Yorkers.** As representatives from across our state, we urge you to bring this critical piece of legislation to a vote before the end of this session.

Sincerely,

Alexander Marion, *Syracuse City Auditor*

Steve Noble, *Mayor of Kingston*

Kamal Johnson, *Mayor of Hudson*

Crystal Hudson, *New York City Council Member*

Chi Ossé, *New York City Council Member*

Tiffany Cabán, *New York City Council Member*

Shahana Hanif, *New York City Council Member*

Shekar Krishnan, *New York City Council Member*

Maureen Cunningham, *Bethlehem Council Member*

Brandon Holdridge, *Chester Town Supervisor*

Michele Hirsch, *Kingston Alderwoman*

Beau Harbin, *Cortland County Legislator*

Veronica Pillar, *Tompkins County Legislator*

Joan Grangeniois-Thomas, *Town of Port Chester Trustee*

Jennifer Mecozzi, *Buffalo School Board Member*