The MTA and toll-tax supporters FALSELY assert an "all or nothing" scenario that outrageous fare hikes must occur without the Ravitch toll-reliant scheme. Nothing remains further removed from the truth. Keep NYC Free calls their bluff. The Keep NYC Free plan and other proposals advanced since last Fall clearly offer sound, equitable and fair options to fund transit with NO reliance on an unfair fare hike and no reliance on an inequitable, unfair and inefficient toll tax on our free bridges. Unlike the Ravitch toll-tax reliant scheme, our plan best serves New York State, New York City, the MTA and most importantly, straphangers. So why not our plan which means no cuts and no fare hike? Is it not better than the toll-tax reliant Ravitch scheme?

http://www.nydailynews.com/ny_local/2009/03/13/2009-03-13_mta_details_budget_cuts_for_subway_buses.html

MTA details budget cuts for subway, buses if Albany doesn't offer bailout

BY Pete Donohue
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The number of token booth clerks will start to drop in April, layoff notices go out in May and 21 local bus routes disappear in July.

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority Friday began detailing how the painful impact of its 2009 budget will roll out this year.

In just a few months, millions of daily subway, bus and commuter train

Token booth workers will be the first hit if the MTA's 2009 budget goes into effect without help from legislators in Albany. Lombard for News

riders will start to experience longer waits, make added transfers and endure more crowded rides.

Approximately 1,100 transit workers, many of them bus drivers, won't even have jobs. They'll be laid off, officials said at an emergency MTA board meeting.

"The situation is dire," MTA Chairman Dale Hemmerdinger said.

Hemmerdinger called the meeting because the state Legislature has failed to adopt a rescue plan.

That means the doomsday budget the MTA approved in December remains on track.

It also includes fare hikes of between 25% and 30% on June 1, closing some downtown subway stations overnight and extending gap times between trains.

Speaker Sheldon Silver (D-Manhattan) has said the Assembly would approve a rescue plan largely mirroring one crafted by former MTA Chairman Richard Ravitch.

That package includes tolls on the currently free East and Harlem river bridges, an employer-paid payroll tax and fare hikes averaging 8%.

The Ravitch plan, which would avert nearly all the service cuts in the doomsday budget, was released Dec. 2.

But state Senate leaders say they are still mulling it and drafting alternatives to tolls and other changes.

"Our members appreciate the severity of the MTA's budget shortfall, and our conference will work to address that issue while protecting taxpayers and straphangers," Austin Shafran, spokesman for Senate Majority Leader Malcolm Smith (D-Queens), said.

Failure to adopt the Ravitch plan would lead to annual budget gaps rising from close to $300 million next year to $612 million in 2012.

That's even with this year's draconian service cuts, the sky-high June fare hikes and fare increases programed for 2011, MTA Chief Financial Officer Gary Dellaverson said.

It also would have a crippling effect on the MTA's construction and maintenance program, MTA officials said, predicting the system would slip into disrepair.

"If this problem doesn't get solved, the blowback to the Legislature is going to be enormous," Hemmerdinger predicted.

"When their people don't have service, when they have to wait longer for their trains or they don't come, it's the legislators who are going to get that call."

With or without a bailout, transit officials said their cost-cutting plans will include cutting about 200 token booth positions and all 600 station customer assistants.
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