

Newsday's editorial writers get it. Keep NYC Free's alternative plan does not rely on a payroll tax as a necessary component and anticipates adjustments in how that revenue measure could be levied.

<http://www.newsday.com/news/opinion/ny-vpmta246081411mar24,0,1679728.story>

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Is that all there is?

We need more options from MTA, Albany

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The Metropolitan Transportation Authority and the State Senate continue to play a game of chicken - barreling toward each other at high speed. Hapless riders are stuck in the middle, anticipating 23 percent fare hikes and service cuts, as the full MTA board votes tomorrow.

The MTA should be first to blink. It's time for Gov. David A. Paterson to admit that the Ravitch Commission ideas - a payroll tax and bridge tolls - are too unpopular to be politically viable. One Long Island mainstay after another has now opposed the payroll tax: the Nassau-Suffolk School Boards Association, the Long Island Association of business and civic groups, several Suffolk County lawmakers and at least six towns.

The tax threatens to swell town and school budgets, putting pressure on the Island's already high property taxes. The opposition at home is reflected in state senators' opposition in Albany - as it should be. The governor and the legislature must work with the MTA to propose a better plan.

Instead of pumping more money into this big bureaucracy, how about setting a timetable for squeezing out costs? Or imitating the innovative advertising techniques used by other transit systems? In the final analysis, some service cuts may be inevitable. These are extraordinary times.

The agency must also figure out a response to its credibility problem. The MTA's frequent and shrill calls for money have lost their ability to scare. Yes, the agency is saddled with debt from prior bad decisions by Albany. But the continuing chaos makes the MTA appear ungovernable.

This bruising battle has not reassured the riding public, which is tied to the tracks. It's time to negotiate.

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