



# Regional Plan Association

*... a research and planning agency supported by voluntary membership to promote the co-ordinated development of the New York- New Jersey-Connecticut Metropolitan Region.*

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## NEWS RELEASE

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Attached is the statement of Dr. John P. Keith, President, Regional Plan Association, presented to the Senate-House Conference Committee Hearing on S 386, Urban Mass Transit Financing, Washington, D. C., September 25, 1974.

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## STATEMENT OF

DR. JOHN P. KEITH, PRESIDENT,  
REGIONAL PLAN ASSOCIATION

before the  
SENATE-HOUSE CONFERENCE COMMITTEE  
CONSIDERING  
S386, URBAN MASS TRANSIT FINANCING  
WASHINGTON, D.C., SEPTEMBER 25, 1974

Mr. Chairman, I am John P. Keith, President of Regional Plan Association, a citizen organization that for almost fifty years has been concerned with comprehensive planning for the Connecticut, New Jersey, New York Urban Region. I appreciate the opportunity to present the Association's views on this prime issue of financing public transportation.

In 1961, at the request of the U.S. Senate Commerce Committee, the Association prepared a report on the federal government's interest in and responsibility for maintaining commuter rail service. Among the recommendations of that report were proposals for a tri-state planning body, state transportation operating agencies, and federal/state/local investments in public transportation. In the thirteen years since, we have seen in response the formation of (1) Tri-State Regional Planning Commission, our Region's A95 regional planning body; (2) transformation of the three state highway departments into comprehensive transportation agencies, and formation of the Connecticut Transportation Authority and its counterpart, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority in New York; (3) acceptance by the state/local governments of their responsibilities for public transportation, including the adoption of several massive bond issues for public transportation by the people of our states, and (4) the enactment of the 1964 Mass Transportation Act sponsored by Senator Williams of New Jersey among others. It initiated federal funding for urban public transportation.

Today, I would like to reiterate some of the points of our 1961 report. They are more valid than ever because, although the public response has been large, it has not been on nearly the scale to prevent the deepening crisis in which the nation's cities now find themselves. And I would like to speak to new reasons, which have emerged in the last decade, for federal concern for public transportation in the 13,000 square miles that represent the New York Urban Region, consisting of New York City, 26 counties and 775 municipalities surrounding, in Connecticut, New Jersey and New York, home to almost ten percent of the nation.

1. The New York area is the nerve center of the nation's economy because of its large role in commerce, finance and world trade. For example, it houses close to 20 percent of the office employment of the nation. Like any urban area, the New York Region is the locus for interactions and transactions of commerce, but in New York's case, it serves not only its environs, but the nation and the world. The health of the New York area is therefore of concern to the nation.

2. In order to allow these economic activities to function efficiently, it is imperative that there be high degrees of concentration of work sites and accessibility to them, feasible only with public transportation. For example, more than three million persons enter and leave Manhattan's Central Business District every day, more than three quarters of them by public transportation. Generally, we find that in the densest square mile of our Region's cities autos bring in about 40 to 50,000 workers; buses, perhaps 100,000; and rail, up to 800,000. Therefore, if we want to bring face-to-face thousands of decision-makers and their support for the conduct of business, only public transportation can serve. This interaction in New York City produced \$14 billion in revenue for the federal government last year.

3. To give some idea of the scale of the Region's public transportation, it carries 37 percent of the nation's public transit passengers. By no means all of that public transportation occurs within New York City, one fifth takes place in the adjacent counties and municipalities of Connecticut, New Jersey and New York. As for rail rapid transit, 75 percent of the nation's journeys to work by rail and subway occur in the New York Region.

4. High on the agenda of the nation is energy conservation. In the New York Region, because of our extensive use of public transportation, energy consumption for transportation per capita is one third less than for the nation as a whole. New York City, relying on public transportation more so than the rest of our Region, uses only about half the energy per capita of the rest of the nation.

5. Federal expenditures for the interstate highway system within the Region are substantially lower both per capita and per motor vehicle. Motorists in the Region pay at least 40 percent more in federal taxes than is returned to the Region for highway construction.

Without federal subsidy the entire New York Region's bus and rail network is in immediate jeopardy. Generally, experience throughout the nation's urban areas indicates that public transportation cannot be supported from the fare box. Because of the national stake in maintaining the New York Urban Region's economy, failure to act in this Congress could require much more drastic action later.