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Written Statement of
Bill Carpenter
Chief Executive Officer
Rochester-Genesee Regional Transportation Authority
Chair, Legislative Committee, New York Public Transit Association
At the Joint Hearing of the
Senate Standing Committee on Finance and
Assembly Standing Committee on Ways and Means
Concerning the SFY 2014-15 Executive Budget Proposal
Relating to Transportation
Albany, NY
January 30, 2014
Hearing Room B

Rochester-Genesee Regional Transportation Authority
1372 East Main Street
Rochester, NY 14609

Chairman DeFrancisco, Chairman Farrell, Chairman Gantt, and members of the Committee, my name is Bill Carpenter. I am the Chief Executive Officer of the Rochester Genesee Regional Transportation Authority (RGRTA). I also serve as Chair of the Legislative Committee for the New York Public Transit Association, and am providing testimony today on behalf of NYPTA. RGRTA's experience will provide insight into why the NYPTA proposal should be enacted.

RGRTA's vision is to become the preferred transportation choice for the residents of Monroe, Genesee, Livingston, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne, and Wyoming counties. Our 841 employees share a commitment and a passion to provide on time, safe, and affordable public transit, including Para-transit service, so that our customers can access jobs, health care, education, retail, and cultural activities.

As my colleague, Carm Basile notes, transit systems are enjoying unprecedented growth. In fact, a recent Public Interest Research Group study on transportation trends in the U.S. revealed that the Rochester community saw a 37.4 percent increase in public transit miles traveled per-capita from 2005 to 2010—ranking us 13th highest in that category in the nation. Our ridership has increased over the past seven years – outpacing the national average – and now totals over 18 million trips annually. Customer satisfaction has risen steadily as well. The \$1 fare we instituted in 2008 will remain in place through 2014.

RGRTA is known throughout the transit industry for effectively blending Government support with customer fare and business partnership revenues, resulting in one of the highest cost recovery ratios in the country – nearly 38% for the most recent fiscal year – and an increase of 23% in seven years. Guided by a disciplined private sector mindset with a performance focused culture, we're driving forward to achieve sustainable growth in a fiscally responsible way.

We are continuously reinventing, streamlining, and providing service and an overall experience that meets the diverse needs of our customers, 65 business partners, and community stakeholders. Here are just a few examples:

- By harnessing GPS technology, we are now able to reliably monitor in real time whether and when our buses reach our bus stops according to our printed schedules. Beginning in 2009, we found we were on time 83% of the time. Last quarter, we achieved 91% on time performances.
- Within the past two years we've further maximized technology investments to drive service excellence. Text, voice, and email messages now notify customers on their cell phones when the real time information for when the next buses will arrive – replacing anxiety with peace of mind and convenience.
- We continue to adjust and redesign service to improve timetables and frequency at the busiest times. Our recently completed multi-year service plan will guide these efforts in the coming years.

Similarly, we prioritize the use of our capital dollars to maintain our fleet of vehicles and lower overall fleet maintenance costs. Thankfully the FY 2013 State Budget included \$21M for Upstate Transit Capital needs. This is the first distribution of State capital dollars since the 2006-2007 SFY. We were able to use our \$1.7M share of these dollars to purchase four, new 40' passenger buses to accommodate our ridership growth.

Because we prioritize our fleet procurement to serve our customers, we have maintenance and storage facilities in need of significant renovation and expansion. We currently have \$25M in unfunded facility needs.

Our most urgent need is to replace our service building. Almost 40 years of water and salt, along with the increased number of buses being serviced in the building on a daily basis, result in the urgent need to build a new \$9M facility to bring our aging facilities to a state of good repair. With federal dollars constrained and long term federal legislation not in sight, we support continuing the state capital appropriation at \$18.5M so that we can continue to provide cost effective, reliable transportation to our growing number of customers.

Excitement is building at RGRTA as we move closer to the completion of our brand-new RTS Transit Center in Downtown Rochester in about 12 months from now. This innovative hub will greatly enhance the customer experience and transform the way people use bus transportation. Customers will access real-time information and make convenient connections to their destinations in a safe, comfortable, and climate-controlled environment. It will be a vital, vibrant destination for millions of riders and visitors to our region.

Completion of the RTS Transit Center is a critical next step in helping us to realize our vision and a critical component of the continuing revitalization of Rochester's downtown core and our region as a whole.

Our reach now extends well beyond those who rely on public transit by necessity. College students and young professionals prefer public transit over car ownership – and are choosing to rent and buy homes in neighborhoods with robust public transit options. Commuters are seeking out bus routes and schedules to avoid the high cost of parking and enhance their lifestyles with added convenience. Older adults and others with impaired mobility readily choose public transit as their preferred transportation because it provides safe, reliable, and easy access to health care appointments, shopping, or leisure activities.

The Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council has established a five-year goal of adding 50,000 jobs to our region. Quality, affordable, and convenient public transportation is a key component for improving the economic health and viability of our region.

To that end, one of the key highlights of 2013 was the success of our transportation partnership with the Professional Golf Association for the 95th PGA Championship. RGRTA transported over 250,000 customers and volunteers from all 50 states and 47 different countries as part of an event that had a \$108 million impact on the region's economy.

The STOA funding level for upstate transit agencies proposed in the Governor's budget is 1.35% higher than last year and up only 1% since 2009. We will continue to grow in a fiscally constrained way with the funds provided to us by seeking out efficiencies, process improvements, and business partners willing to subsidize additional services. At the same time, looking ahead to future opportunities, I join with my colleagues and encourage your long-term investment in public transit at a level that will enable us to support the increasing demand for public transportation and the demands caused by a growing economy.

On behalf of all the NYPTA members and on behalf of RGRTA's Board of Commissioners, the employees, and residents of the seven counties we serve, I want to thank Governor Cuomo for his Executive Budget and the Legislature for your ongoing support for public transit. We effectively use your funding to improve the quality of life in our area. You have my commitment to successfully serve our communities as we drive forward to be the preferred transportation choice.