

MOBILITY NEWSLETTER

Research and reporting from California, the U.S.,
and around the world.

July 2, 2024



Mobility Headlines:

Transportation news from around the U.S.

Congestion pricing scheme in NYC is vetoed in last-minute order by New York State Governor Kathy Hochul

June 5th

Following months of build up to the MTA's target implementation date for the NYC congestion pricing scheme in late June, New York State Governor Kathy Hochul unexpectedly announced an indefinite halt on the pricing plan. She cited concerns of over-burdening New Yorkers dealing with increasing costs of living in an economy still recovering from the COVID pandemic.

The plan proposed a minimum \$15 toll for passenger vehicles entering the city in addition to tolls for all other vehicles including large trucks, motorcycles, and rideshare vehicles. The congestion pricing plan was contested strongly by the public, facing multiple lawsuits from the state of New Jersey, among others, but the MTA forged ahead in recent months to push the plan through. The agency is now left scrambling to fill the the \$1 billion gap in annual revenue left behind without the tolls.



Photo by [Lerone Pieters](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Automated camera enforcement expands at MTA in an effort to improve accessibility for riders

June 18th

In more uplifting news, the MTA deployed new cameras on buses across 14 routes to capture and fine vehicles violating bus lane rules. In all, these routes are serviced by over 620 vehicles. In previous deployments, MTA and NYDOT found that automated camera enforcement had several key benefits, including:

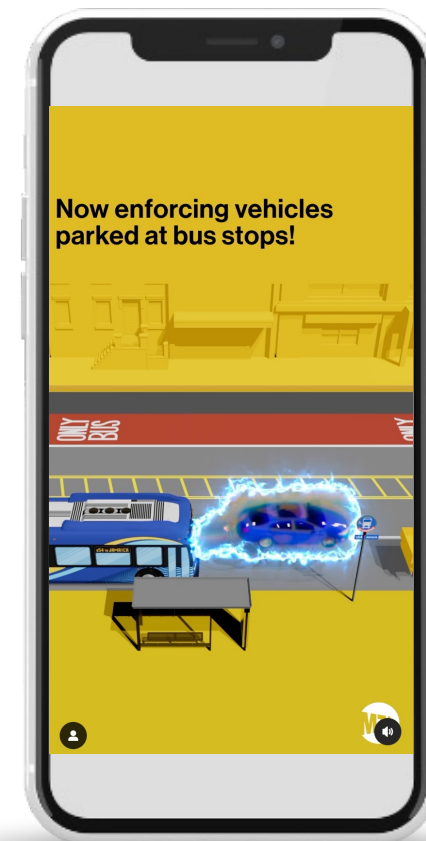
- Fewer collisions
- Reduced emissions
- Increased bus lane speeds
- Nearly 80% of fined drivers don't violate bus lane rules again

MTA notes that keeping bus lanes clear is particularly important to system accessibility, since it ensures there are no obstructions for riders boarding or disembarking buses. MTA's bus system was the first large public transit system with a fully wheelchair accessible fleet in 1993 – the agency's accessibility efforts are ongoing, with a pledge to make 95% of the subway system ADA-compliant.

Sources: [Mass Transit](#)

[MTA](#)

[The New York Times](#)



The MTA announced the new enforcement cameras with a comical social media campaign, picturing the camera-equipped buses vaporizing cars in their wake. (S)

108 new zero-emission buses may soon come to SamTrans thanks to \$15 million in state funding

June 21st

San Mateo County Transit District (SamTrans) is dedicated to replacing its entire fleet with zero-emission buses (ZEB) by 2034. By the end of 2024 alone, SamTrans expects to have a total of 47 battery-electric and hydrogen fuel cell buses.

The California Transportation Commission allocated \$15 million through the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program to support SamTrans's purchase of 108 ZEBs, the agency's largest ZEB purchase to date. These funds come as part of a larger \$1.9 billion allocation from the CTC to support transportation projects throughout the state.

Transit agencies in California are expected to have fully zero-emission fleets by 2040. As such, many transit agencies are leveraging state and federal funds to update fleets, and some, like SamTrans, are aiming to beat the 2040 timeline.



Photo by [Tommy Krombacher](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Electric bike rebates are on the rise as states and cities work to help speed adoption.

June 25th

Numerous e-bike [incentive programs](#) have been proposed and implemented in recent years across the US, administered by states and cities alike. These programs typically rely on partnerships with local institutions and bike retailers, and some are targeted specifically at low-income consumers. We have our eyes on three such programs:

California – The California E-bike Incentive Project is expected to launch in 2024, providing low-income applicants with vouchers for \$1,750 or \$2,000.

Denver, CO – In February, Denver launched the first round of their e-bike rebate program, distributing vouchers of up to \$1400 to applicants. Within 8 minutes, all vouchers were sold out. A fourth round of applications is set to open August 27.

Minnesota – On July 2, Minnesotans will have access to a portal to apply for e-bike rebate of up to \$1,500 towards the purchase of a new e-bike and select accessories. The program will continue to accept recipients until the program's \$2 million cap is reached.

Sources: [Minnesota Department of Revenue](#)

[CARB](#)

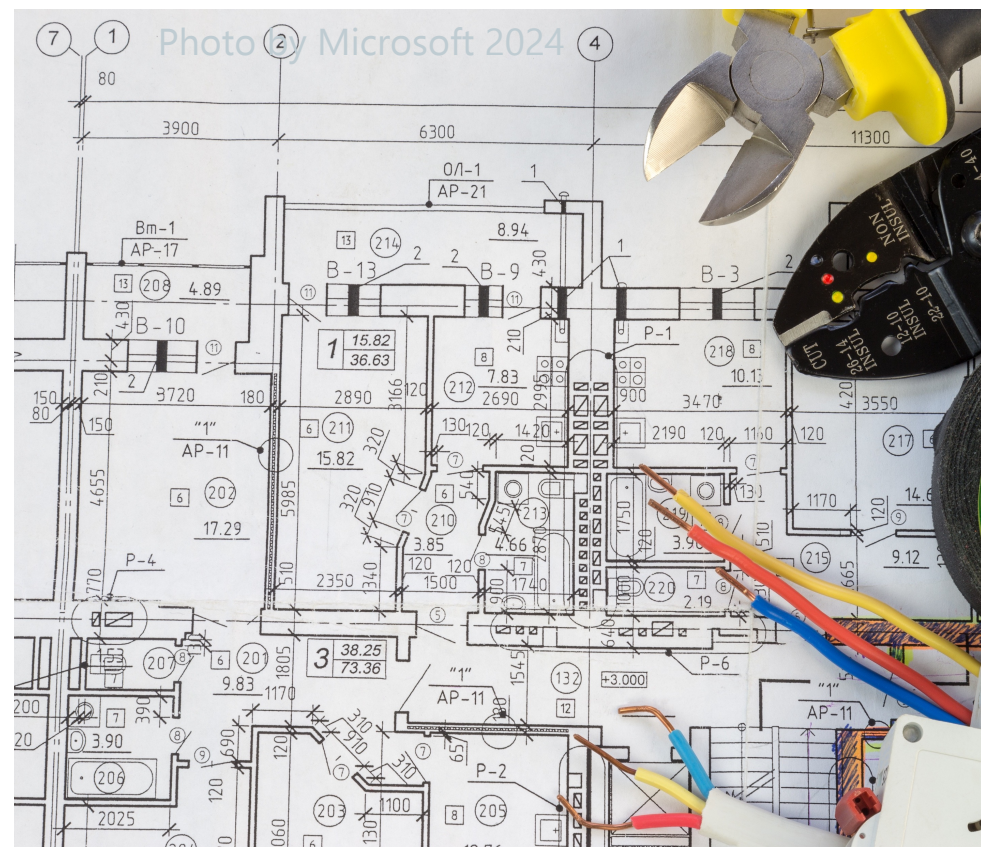
[DenverGov](#)

Millions in federal funds to support multimodal development in Maryland

June 25th

The Maryland Department of Transportation has received \$4.7 million in RAISE funds to support planning for the Reisterstown Plaza Metro Station. The project will include transit-oriented development, putting transit as a priority at critical early planning stages.

The mixed-use development will bring housing, new retail, and open space to the community. Further, the focus on transit will address equity concerns, increasing connectivity to core services through transit. When finished, the development is expected to convert an underutilized park-and-ride parcel to a community hub.



Strikes may be on the way for New Jersey Transit after failed negotiations spanning four years

June 25th

Since 2019, NJ Transit engineers have been working on expired contracts, meaning the engineers have not seen any pay raises in 5 years. The National Mediation Board stepped in shortly after to attempt to achieve a resolution between NJ Transit and its engineers as they renegotiated contracts. After four years, no such resolution has been reached.

Although strikes can happen as soon as July 25th, it may be months before they actually kick off. Since such a strike can significantly impact core services – commuting and commerce – it is likely that President Joe Biden will need to intervene with a Presidential Emergency Board to attempt a resolution. This process will prevent any strikes for a 120-day period while resolution discussions are underway.



Photo by [Claudio Schwarz](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Bank card “swipe fees” are up for negotiation, with big implications for merchants’ costs.

June 24th

This week, a federal judge rejected a \$30 billion settlement reached by Visa and MasterCard to cap merchant fees across the United States. These fees are charged every time a customer makes a purchase with a bank card, and merchants pay these fees as a percentage of each transaction (typically 1-3% of total purchase cost). The dispute over swipe fees in the U.S. goes back nearly 20 years, and merchants have tried in vain to secure lower rates from the card networks.

Despite this setback, which will likely lead into another drawn-out settlement process or even a trial, some states are taking matters into their own hands. The Pennsylvania House of Representatives introduced bill HB2934 this month to reduce swipe fees. These fees can become significant, impacting pricing, and can represent one of the largest operating costs for merchants. The bill aims to reduce “undue financial burden,” but the bill’s future remains uncertain.

Sources: [WTAJ](#)

[Washington Post](#)



Impact on Transit

With more transit agencies streamlining the rider experience through open-loop payments, reduced fees may bring significant savings on operating costs for agencies accepting credit card taps.

A reduction in swipe fees would be a win-win for both transit operators and riders.



Question, feedback, or topic you would like to know more about? Please reach out to angelly.tovar@rebelgroup.com