Senator Charles Schumer  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Schumer:

On behalf of over 3,000 faculty, staff and administrators at New York University who commute within the New York Metro Area, we urge you to support passage of legislation to establish permanent parity between the parking and transit portions of the commuter benefit. Legislation to establish parity has been introduced in both the U.S. Senate (S.1116, the “Commuter Benefits Equity Act”) and the House of Representatives (H.R. 2288, the “Commuter Parity Act).

At the beginning of this year, as part of the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012, Congress enacted a provision to increase the transit portion of the commuter benefit to $240 per month. A subsequent IRS cost-of-living adjustment raised the limit to $245 per month. This important legislation re-established parity between the parking and transit benefits to provide commuters who choose public transportation the same tax savings as those who drive to work. However, this increase is only temporary. Unless Congress acts this year to establish permanent parity, or at the very least further extend the temporary increase, the transit portion of the benefit will plunge to almost half the level of the parking benefit.

A decrease in the transit portion of the commuter benefit will result in an increased tax burden for thousands of workers who rely on public transportation for their daily commutes. For example, a working family that takes advantage of the full allowable monthly pre-tax deduction for transit in 2013 could pay as much as $500 more next year in federal taxes without legislation to maintain the current level of the transit benefit. This is a significant cost increase that many Americans simply cannot afford. The reduction in the monthly transit limit will also result in an increase in payroll taxes for many businesses that offer the benefit – important resources that could be reinvested in the economy to create new jobs.

Failure to adopt this important legislation prior to December 31, 2013 will establish a federal policy that will encourage commuters to drive to work, rather than use public transportation. This will result in increased traffic congestion on our roads, a rise in our nation’s reliance on foreign fuel imports, and more pollution.

As you work to address many of the important issues that face our nation, we urge you to not forget the more than 2.7 million commuting Americans that rely on the transit commuter benefit and work to pass legislation that will ensure that transit riders can continue to afford their commute to work.

Sincerely,

David A Vogelsang, Chair  
David Vintinner, Vice Chair