

**MINUTES OF THE JUNE 16, 2020
MEETING OF THE SOMERSET COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
HELD AT 4:45PM
ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING**

This meeting was held as a virtual meeting. Information on how to join the meeting was posted on the County website and published in the newspapers. Chairman Navatto, Jr. reported the meeting had been duly advertised in accordance with Open Public Meetings Act.

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, the June 16, 2020 meeting of the Somerset County Planning Board convened at 4:45pm. The meeting was held in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act.

Pledge of Allegiance

Open Public Meetings Statement

The Roll was called and the following were in Attendance:

Bernie Navatto, Jr, Chairman
Christopher Kelly, Vice Chairman
Al Ellis, Member
John Schneider, Member
Jeffrey Wright, Member
William Zeigler, 1st Alternate
Ericka Inocencio, 2nd Alternate
Adam Slutsky, Alternate to County Engineer

Joesph DeMarco, Esq., Deputy County Counsel

Adam Slusky, Alternate to County Engineer, will be voting in place of Matt Loper, County Engineer

Absent

John Lindner, Member
Matthew Loper, Secretary/County Engineer
Freeholder Director Robinson
Freeholder Deputy Director Sooy, Liaison

Also Present:

Walter Lane, Director of Planning
Anthony McCracken, Assistant Director
Thomas D'Amico, Supervising Planner
Ken Wedeen, Supervising Transportation Planner
Laurette Kratina, Chief of Stratgic Planning
Andras Holzmann, Senior Planner
James Ruggieri , Principal Community Planner

Kate Katzer, Principal Planner
Cynthia Mellusi, Office Manager

Approval of May 19, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Chairman Navatto, asked for the motion to approve the Minutes of the May 19, 2020 Planning Board Meeting. The motion was made by John Schneider and seconded by Jeffrey Wright. A Voice Vote was called and the motion moved unanimously.

Discussion/Presentation Items:

Regional Plan Association Update

Director of Planning Walter Lane introduced Nat Bottigheimer, NJ Director for the Regional Plan Association. Director Lane provided a brief summary of the various efforts the County has worked with the Regional Plan Association (RPA) over the years.

Mr. Bottigheimer gave a detailed overview of RPA's work on several ongoing initiatives. He provided a summary of their work to understand the impacts of COVID-19 on the greater New York City area. RPA has analyzed the economic, travel and health impacts the regional has had due the pandemic. Other topics discussed during his presentation included: the future of work travel to New York City, forthcoming advocacy reports developed by RPA and how to improve equity in our region. Chairman Navatto thanked Mr. Bottigheimer for his excellent presentation. A copy of RPA's presentation is attached to these minutes.

Planning Director's Report

Director of Planning Walter Lane provided an overview of work underway in the Planning Division. He reported the Office continues to successfully operate remotely. He stated that no date has been set for a return to the office and expects the July Planning Board Meeting to be held virtually. Updates on other projects included:

- The June 9th Planning Partners Forum was very successful and over 40 people attended the virtual forum
- Staff attended a meeting for Manville Complete Streets Project
- Bernardsville adopted a Complete Streets resolution with assistance from the Planning Division, RideWise and Healthier Somerset. The Borough also introduced a redevelopment plan for the former Audi Dealership site. This site was part of the Supporting Priority Investment in Somerset County Phase Three Study. The Redevelopment Plan incorporates many of the County Study's recommendations.
- Staff participated on a kickoff meeting for Raritan's NJTPA Emerging Center Grant Project. This effort also builds off the Supporting Priority Investment in Somerset County Phase Three Study.
- Director Lane facilitated the scheduling of a meeting between South Bound Brook and NJ Department of Transportation regarding the Borough's application to be designated a Transit Village.

- Director Lane, as President of the NJ County Planners Association, held a Long-Term Recovery Working Group meeting to discuss how County Planning Board could address the impacts of COVID-19.

ACTION ITEMS/ITEMS INFORMATION ITEMS:

June 2020 Land Development Report and Approval of the May 2020 First Time Submissions

Thomas D'Amico, Supervising Planner, referred to the report in the Planning Board Packets.

At the June 10, 2020 meeting of the County Planning Board Land Development Committee the Committee reviewed a number of projects as well as the first time submissions for the month of May 2020. The meeting was held via Zoom.

Ridge Apartments at Bound Brook II Waiver Request, Bound Brook

Tom outlined the waiver request from the developers of the Ridge Apartments at Bound Brook II project which was first presented at last month's Land Development Committee meeting. The project consists of a proposed 42-unit five-story apartment building located at the intersection of Mountain Avenue (County Route 527) and Second Street (a local road).

The developers, De Mattheis Real Estate, wish to waive two requirements in the County Planning Board's land development review report dated March 17, 2020. The first requires a master plan right-of-way 66 feet (33 feet from the centerline) along Mountain Avenue which is designated as a minor arterial in the Somerset County Road Functional Classification System. The building as proposed is within the 66 foot right-of way setback. The developer is willing to modify the building to be outside of 50 feet but would still be inside the County's 66 foot right of way. Second, the developers wish to waive the requirement that any new driveway be at least 35 feet from the county right-of-way line.

They wish to construct a driveway on Second Street with a separation of 29.63 feet from the right-of-way line along Mountain Avenue. The developers propose to restrict this driveway to right turn in and right turn out only.

At the May meeting the Committee agreed to defer a decision until the June Committee meeting to allow an investigation by the County Engineering Division of the master plan right-of-way along the entire County Route 527 corridor.

County Engineer Matt Loper presented the findings of the Engineering Division's investigation of the County Route 527 corridor. Matt noted the investigation looked at the road functionality based on various right-of-way widths of 66 feet, 60 feet and 50 feet. The analysis also looked at the Somerset County Master Plan, the County Complete Streets Resolution, the County Walk, Bike Hike Study, and the County Americans with Disability Act Compliance Plan. Matt noted that the investigation determined that we do not need a 66 foot right-of-way in this segment of the County Route 537 corridor to accomplish the goals of the Master Plan. However, a right-of-way width which could accommodate a three-lane cross section, in this case a center turning lane, is

necessary in this segment of the corridor. Matt stated that a 60 foot right-of way would not only permit a three-lane cross section but would also accommodate on street parking. A 50 foot right-of way, as requested by the developer, with a three lane cross section, would not accommodate on street parking and shoulders.

The Committee moved and seconded that the request to wave the 66-foot master plan right-of-way and to permit a 50-foot right-of-way for the project in question be denied and that correspondence be transmitted to the applicant requesting that the applicant consider a 60 foot right-of-way along the subject property. The motion passed unanimously. Staff will draft a letter to that effect and transmit it to the applicant.

First Time Submissions

The Committee reviewed all first time submissions for the month of May. During the month, the County Planning Board reviewed a total of 18 submissions. There were two new lots proposed and two new lots created. Of the site plans proposed during the month there was 42,056 square feet of non-residential building space and 80 multi-family units proposed. There was \$63,618 in improvement value paid to the County Planning Board. There was \$3,050 in development review fees paid to the County Planning Board.

Bernard V. Navatto, Jr. did not take any action on or participate in any discussion concerning the Kovacs site plan in Somerville.

Chairman Navatto asked for the motion to approve the June 2020 Land Development Report and Approval of the May 2020 First Time Submissions. The motion was made by Chris Kelly and seconded by Jeffrey Wright. The Roll was called, and the motion passed unanimously.

Presevation Plan Update

Thomas D'Amico, Supervising Planner, stated that the County is undertaking an update of the County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan, the Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan and the development of a new Historic Preservation Plan.

The County has contracted with Heritage Strategies to coordinate the report along with New Jersey Conservation Foundation to develop the Open Space Plan, Land Stewardship Solutions to develop the Farmland Preservation Plan and Barton Ross and Partners to develop the Historic Preservation Plan. The GIS mapping is being handled by Washington College.

All comments on the Historic Preservation Plan have been sent to the consultants and we are currently reviewing the seven maps for the Historic Preservation element. The open space and agricultural preservation plans comments have also been submitted to the consultants are being incorporated into the text. Staff expects the historic preservation section to be completed and ready to be reviewed by the steering committee in a few weeks. He reported staffs plans to hold a steering committee meeting in July and to complete all sections of the report by mid-summer and have it ready to for public release in a few months.

The plan has coordinated with the completed Walk, Bike, Hike Somerset County Connecting Vibrant Communities Plan and the completed County Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Somerset County Agriculture Roundtable Discussion Update

Kate Katzer, Principal Planner, reported that staff hosted an Agriculture Roundtable, with direction by Freeholder Marano, to brainstorm ways of safely getting fresh produce to the public, while aiding our farmers. The Roundtable members consisted of Planning, OEM, and Rutgers staff, as well as members from our farming community and SADC staff. After two very productive meetings, the roundtable members decided that the best course of action was to develop a resource document as a 'one-stop-shop', all-encompassing piece of literature for farmers, towns, and the general public to utilize as a way of keeping themselves and others safe during farmer market interactions. The document has internal linking for ease of use, and is searchable to allow users the ability to quickly get to the information they are looking for. The intention of this resource is to act as a living document, where updates can be made as new information is released. It is the hope of the staff that this document can bring a greater sense of confidence and comfort to the operators and to the public. The document has been out for approximately two weeks, and we have already heard positive feedback from those utilizing the document and the contents.

Director Lane thanked Ms. Katzer for her great work on the Farmers Market Resource document and commended Freeholder Marano for her leadership on this effort. He also reported Ms. Katzer is also working on alternate plans for Farmers Market operations if stricter protocols are enacted to stem the spread of COVID-19.

2020 Census Update

Ken Wedeen, Supervising Transportation Planner, reported that the Somerset County Complete Count Committee (SCCCC) met last week and received an update from Allison Jackson, Census Partnership Specialist on the latest changes and developments in the Census Bureau 2020 programming and outreach efforts.

The SCCCC is working directly with Healthier Somerset, The United Way of Northern New Jersey and various municipalities to share printed census materials. The SCCCC is working with the Salvation Army in Bound Brook Borough and a local food bank in North Plainfield Borough sharing bottled water and snacks and printed census materials and giveaways with persons in low self-response areas. The SCCCC is also working with the Office on Aging to provide printed census materials and giveaways for drive thru events that will be held at six senior centers in July. Census materials will also be distributed to seniors along with farmers markets vouchers.

Staff is finalizing several budget modifications that will provide additional funding for print and digital newspaper advertisements, additional funding for targeted digital marketing content and for purchasing lawn signs, door hangars and paper bags to distribute to local food pantries.

Somerset County Road Corridor Safety Analysis Sub Regional Study

Andras Holzmann, Senior Planner, reported that the staff from Planning and Engineering have begun working with the consultant to gather data on traffic volumes, crashes, and road infrastructure.

An initial list of county road corridors with the highest automobile crashes and bicycle and pedestrian crashes was reviewed. Staff will add corridors to the initial list. The Steering Advisory Committee (SAC) will pick the corridors for the study from this list. The SAC will meet for the first time in early July. The consultant has prepared a draft plan for public outreach for the project which is under review by staff.

Resolution Concerning Informal and Formal Review and Consent by the Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders Regarding Somerset County Wastewater Management Plan Components

Director of Planning Walter Lane reviewed the draft resolution which was included in the Board Packet. This resolution authorizes the submission of various components of the draft wastewater management plan as well as sewer service amendments serviced by Middlesex County. As part of Middlesex County's wastewater planning procedures, all wastewater planning related documents must be submitted by resolution. The draft resolution had been reviewed and approved by the Environment and Utility Committee as well as County Counsel.

Director Lane asked the Board to approve the resolution. A motion to approve the resolution was made by Vice Chair Chris Kelly and seconded by John Schneider. The motion passed unanimously.

Wastewater Management Plan Update

Director Lane stated he was happy to report the draft buildout and capacity analysis required as part of the wastewater management plan was distributed to the municipalities earlier in the day. Workshops with the municipalities to discuss the draft buildout and capacity analysis have been scheduled for June 30th and July 1st. Comments on the analysis are due back on July 23rd. He thanked Laurette Kratina for her work on this effort as well as Aarthy Sabesan, Christina Tricarico and Andy Phillips for their excellent GIS support.

Director Lane stated the goal is to submit a draft wastewater management plan to the NJ Department of Environmental Protection for review in September.

State Plan Update

Director Lane reported on work to assist the municipalities to pursue Plan Endorsement status continues. Discussions regarding the County seeking Plan Endorsement status are ongoing.

Public Comments

Bernie Navatto opened the meeting to the public. There being no comments, the meeting was closed to the public.

Committee Reports

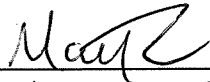
The Committee Reports were included in the meeting packet.

Next Meeting Date: July 21, 2020 @4:45pm

Adjournment:

There being no further business before the Board, Chairman Navatto asked for a motion to Adjourn. The motion was made by Jeffrey Wright and seconded by Chris Kelly. A Voice Vote was called and the motion moved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,



Matthew D. Loper, Secretary



Somerset County Planning Board

June 16, 2020

Nat Bottigheimer
NJ Director
Regional Plan Association

Presentation Overview

COVID-19 Research

Future of Work Travel to Manhattan

Recent and Forthcoming Advocacy Reports

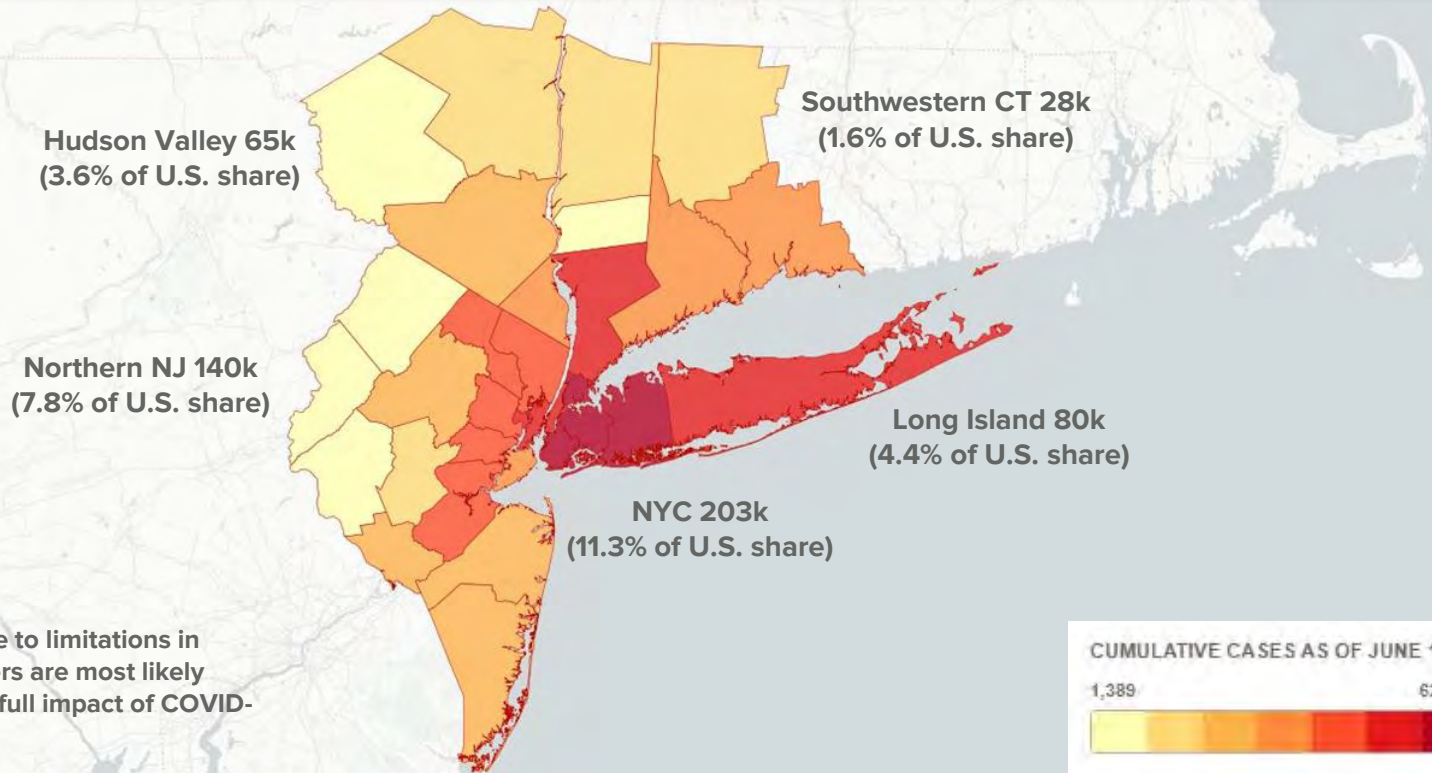
Be My Neighbor

Five-Borough Bikeway

Keeping our Transit Systems Solvent

Strengthened Equity Theme

519,000 Cumulative Cases of COVID-19 in the Tri-State Region (29% of U.S. total share)*



*Data as of 6/01 - Due to limitations in testing, these numbers are most likely underestimating the full impact of COVID-19

40,500 Cumulative Deaths of COVID-19 in the Tri-State Region (39% of U.S. total share)*

Hudson Valley 2.6k
(2.4% of U.S. share)

Northern NJ 10.6k
(10% of U.S. share)

Southwestern CT 2.4k
(2.3% of U.S. share)

Long Island 4k
(3.8% of U.S. share)

NYC 20.9k
(20% of U.S. share)

*Data as of 6/01 - Due to limitations in testing, these numbers are most likely underestimating the full impact of COVID-19

CUMULATIVE DEATHS AS OF JUNE 1ST

133

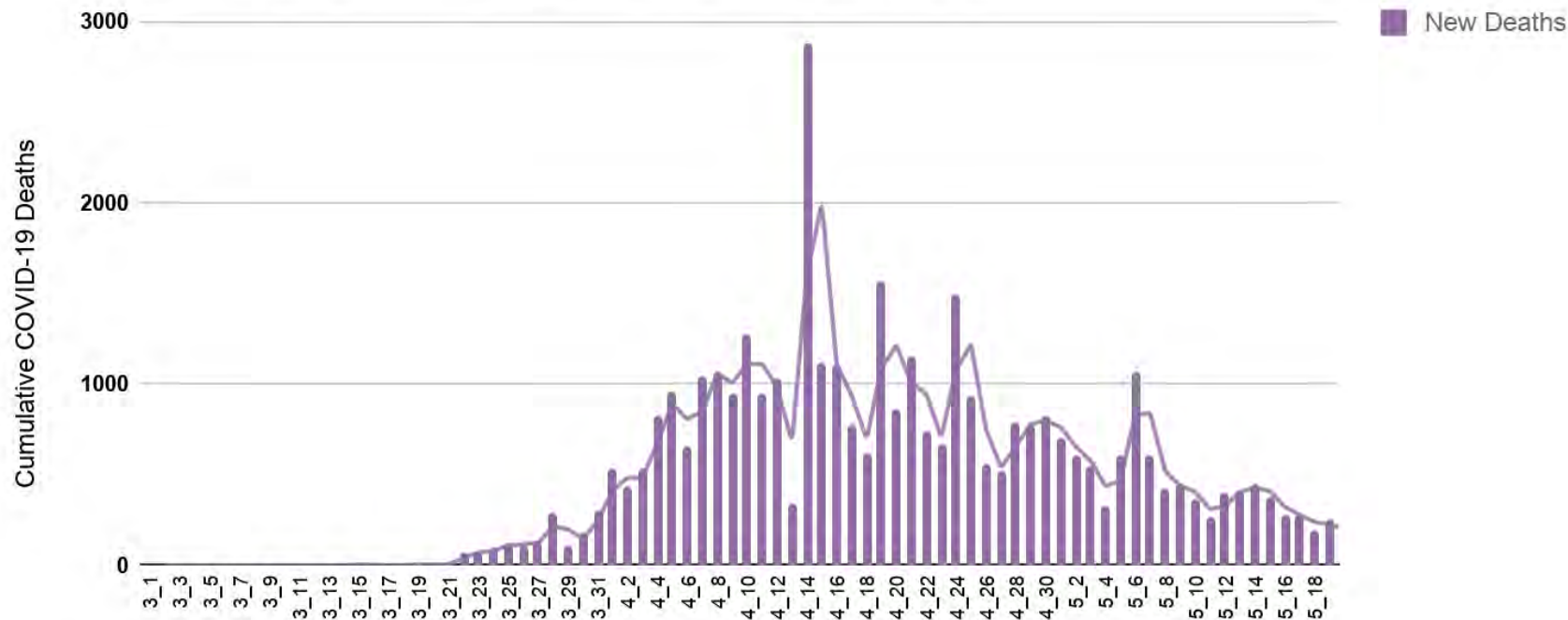
6,627



Around 1,000 new deaths on a daily basis during the peak of the curve (second week of April)

COVID-19 Daily Deaths within the Tri-State Region (March - May 19th)

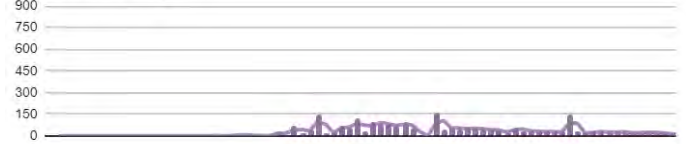
Data from state- and local-level public health agencies via USA FACTS



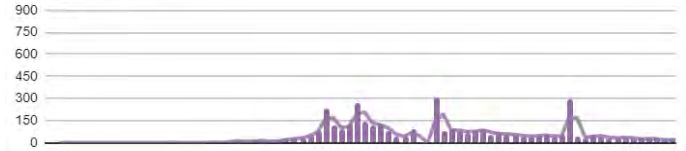
Around 1,500 new daily deaths during the peak of the curve in the Tri-State Region

■ New Deaths

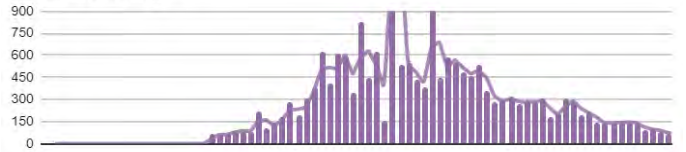
Hudson Valley



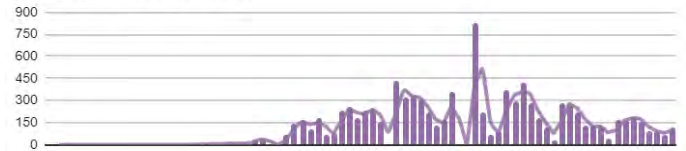
Long Island



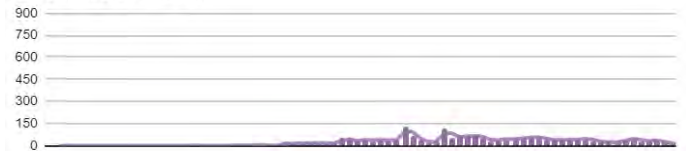
New York City



Northern New Jersey



Southwestern CT

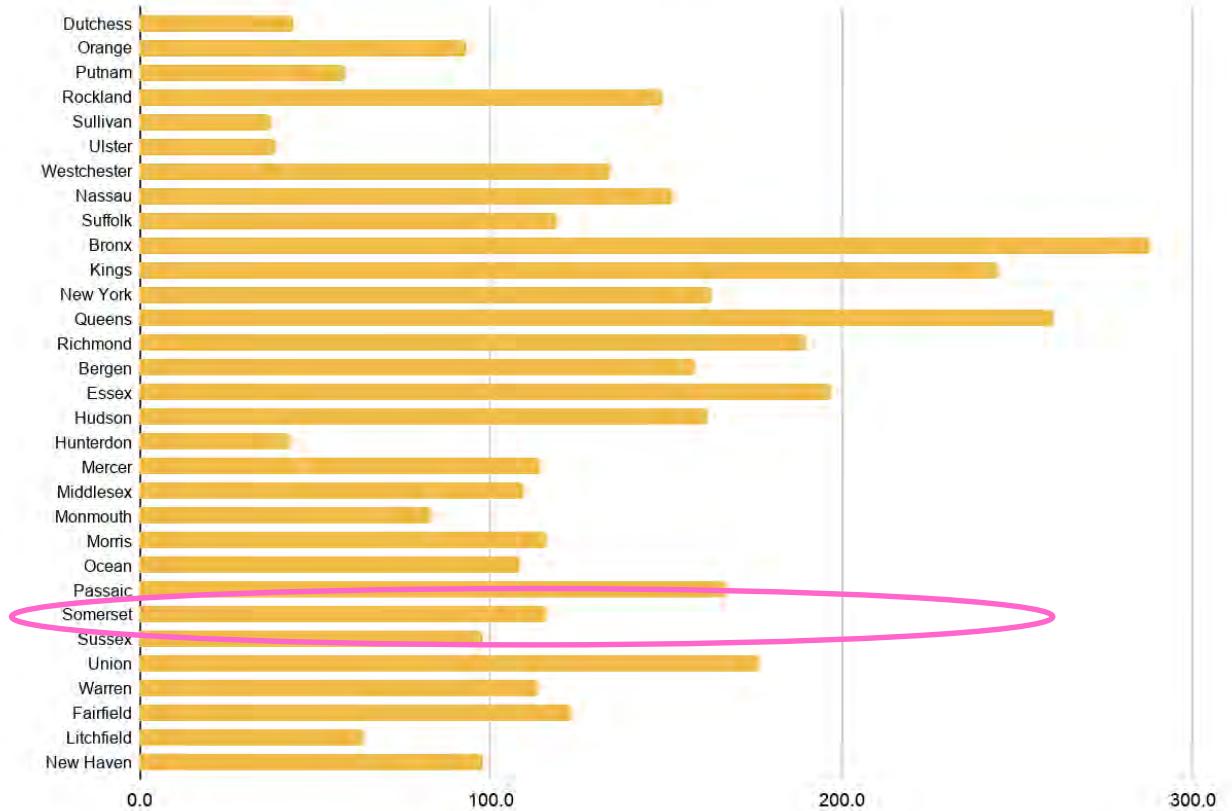


Counties with most Deaths per Capita (5/19)

1. Bronx, NY
2. Queens, NY
3. Kings, NY
4. Essex, NJ
5. Richmond, NY
6. Union, NJ
7. Passaic, NJ
8. New York, NY
9. Hudson, NY
10. Bergen, NJ

Cumulative Deaths per 100,000 Residents by County (5/19)

Data from state- and local-level public health agencies via USA FACTS



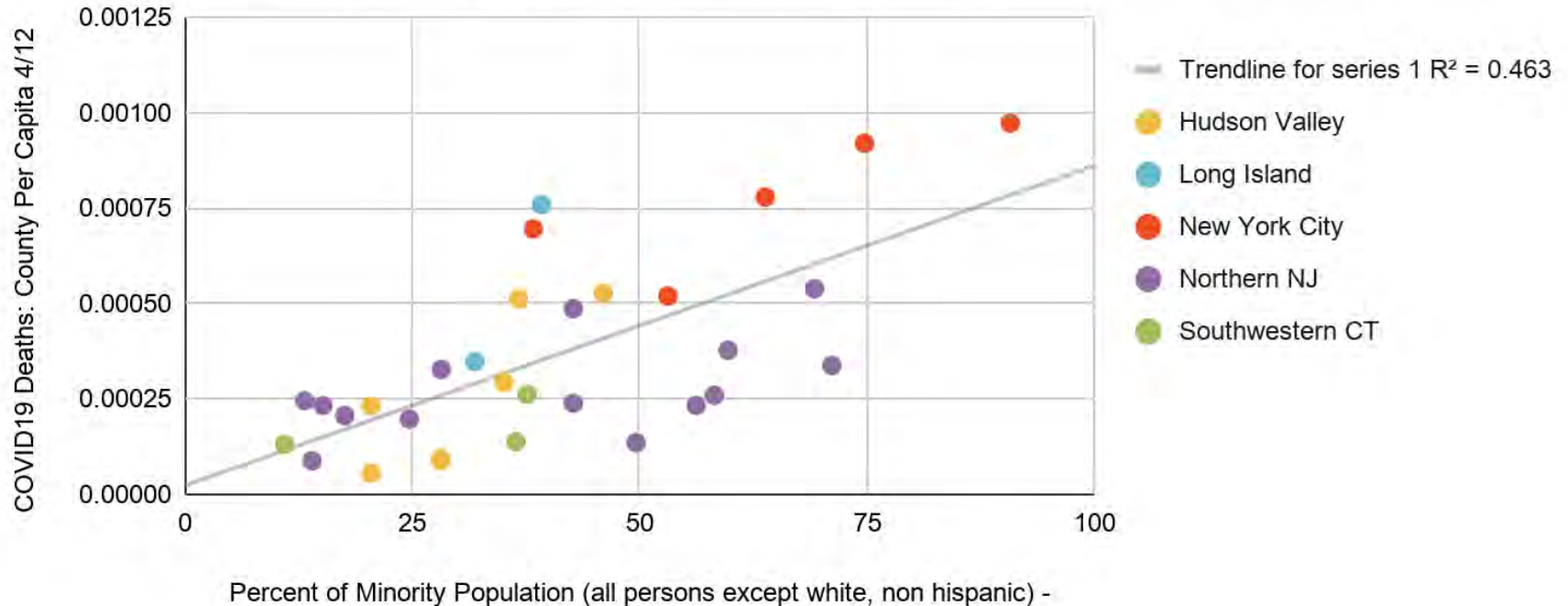
Preliminary Assessment

- **Comparing deaths per capita by County with social, economic, demographic, and other known factors can reveal correlations.**
- **Caveats: data are as of 5/19 and continue to evolve, and actual COVID-19 deaths may well exceed reported deaths.**

Preliminary Findings: Correlation between COVID-19 Deaths and Persons of Color

Cumulative Deaths Per Capita and Persons of Color

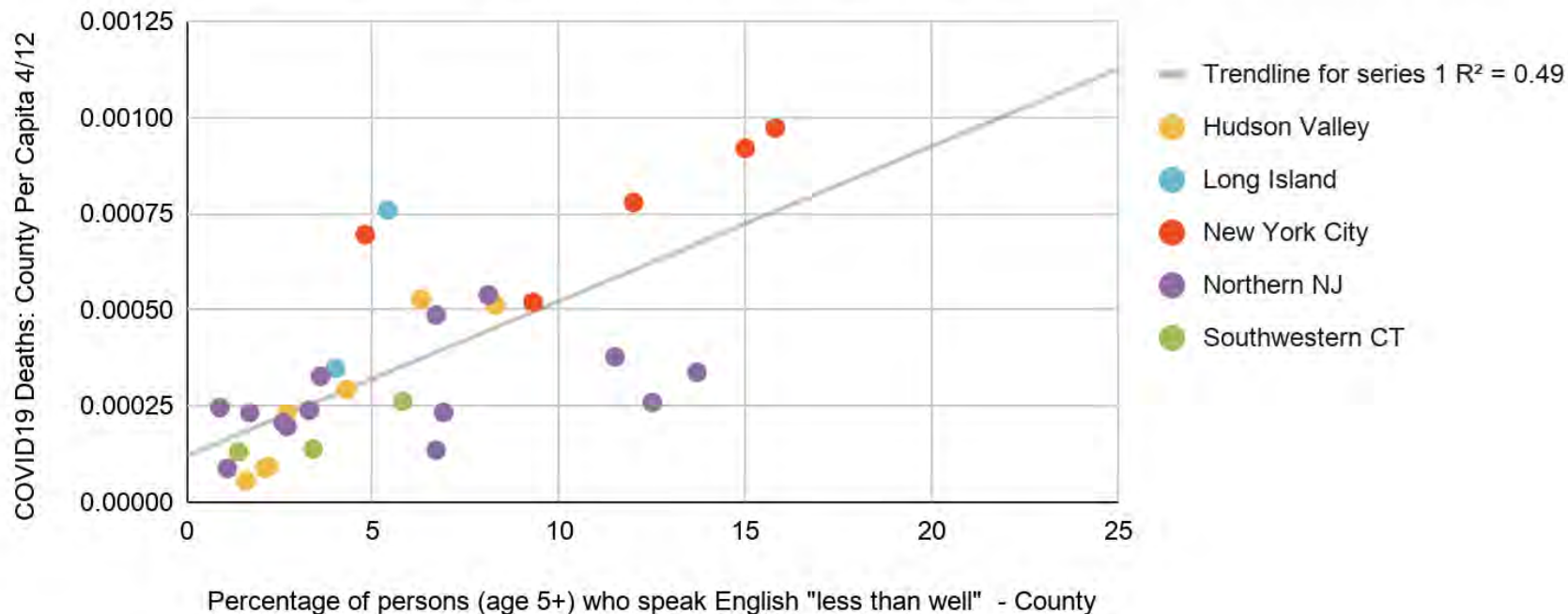
Deaths from state and local level public health agencies via USA FACTS and CDC Social Vulnerability Index



Preliminary Findings: Correlation between COVID-19 Deaths and non-English speakers

Cumulative Deaths Per Capita and Percentage off non-English speakers

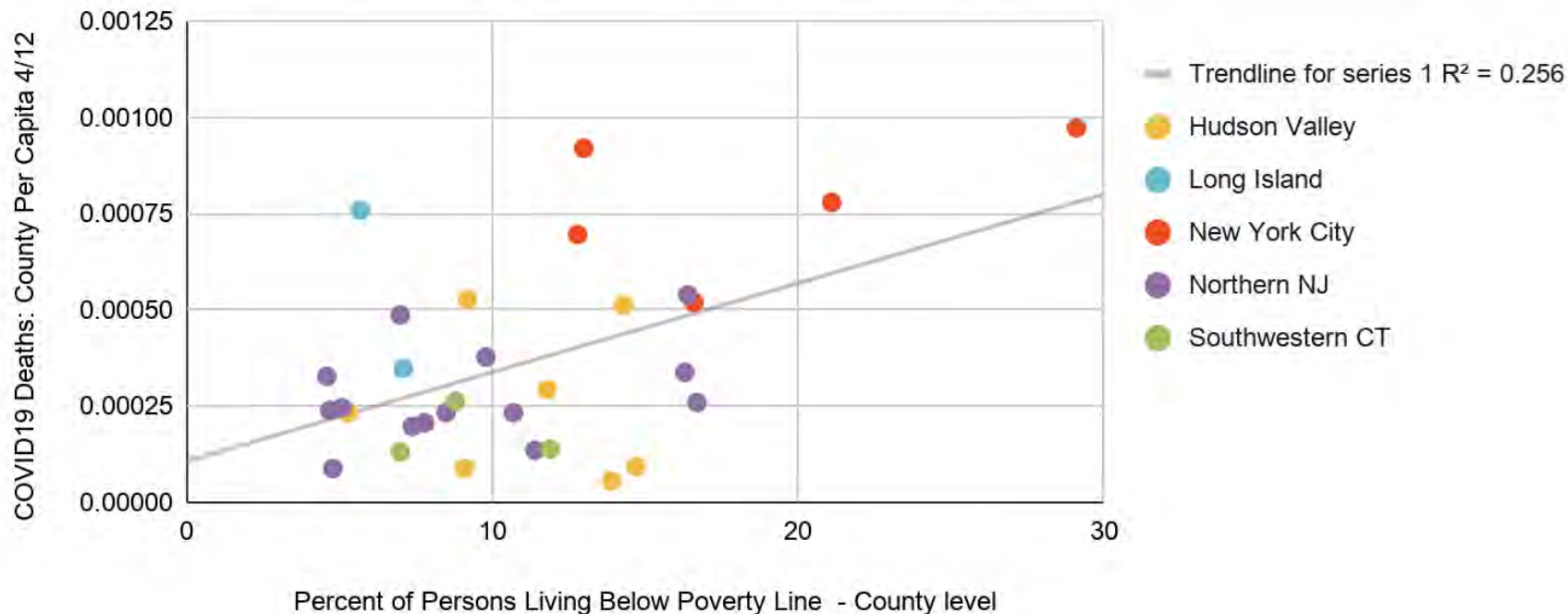
Deaths from state and local level public health agencies via USA FACTS and CDC Social Vulnerability Index



Preliminary Findings: Correlation between COVID-19 Deaths and Socioeconomic Factors

Cumulative Deaths Per Capita and Population Living in Poverty

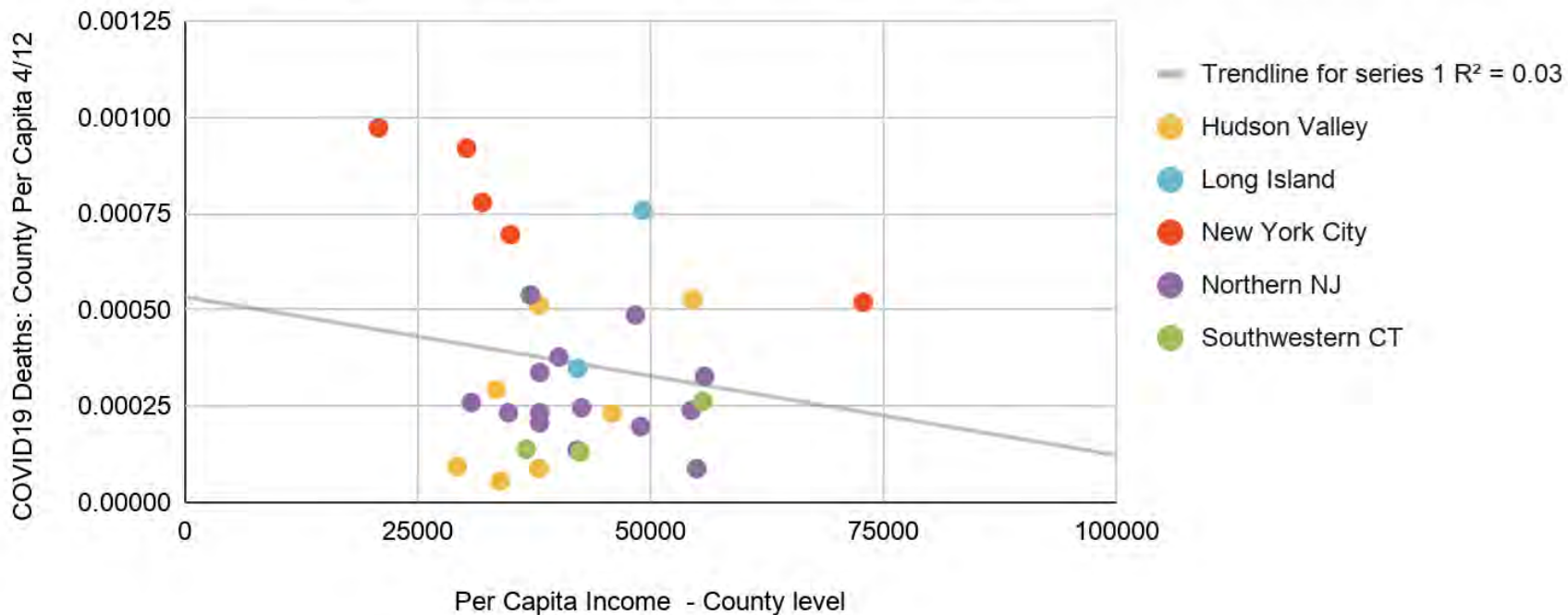
Deaths from state and local level public health agencies via USA FACTS and CDC Social Vulnerability Index



Preliminary Findings: Correlation between COVID-19 Deaths and Socioeconomic Factors

Cumulative Deaths Per Capita and Income

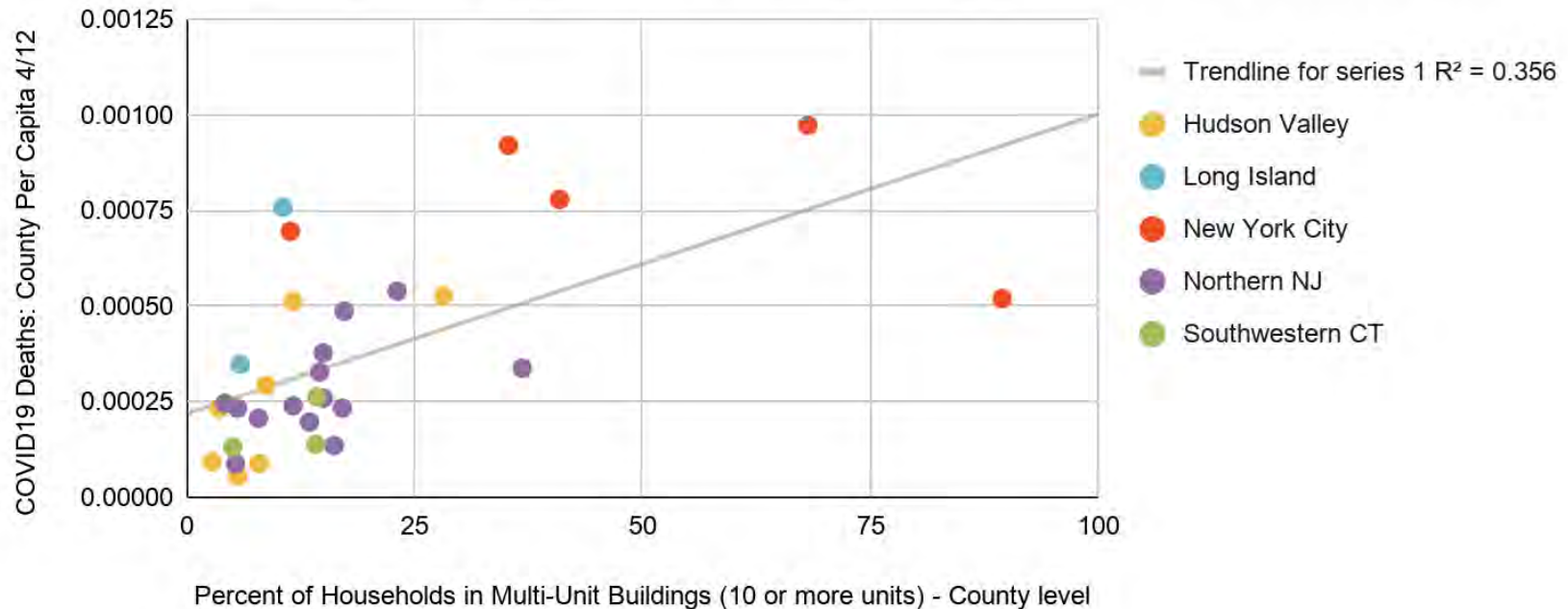
Deaths from state and local level public health agencies via USA FACTS and CDC Social Vulnerability Index



Preliminary Findings: Correlation between COVID-19 Deaths and Housing

Cumulative Deaths Per Capita and Percentage of Households in Multi-Units

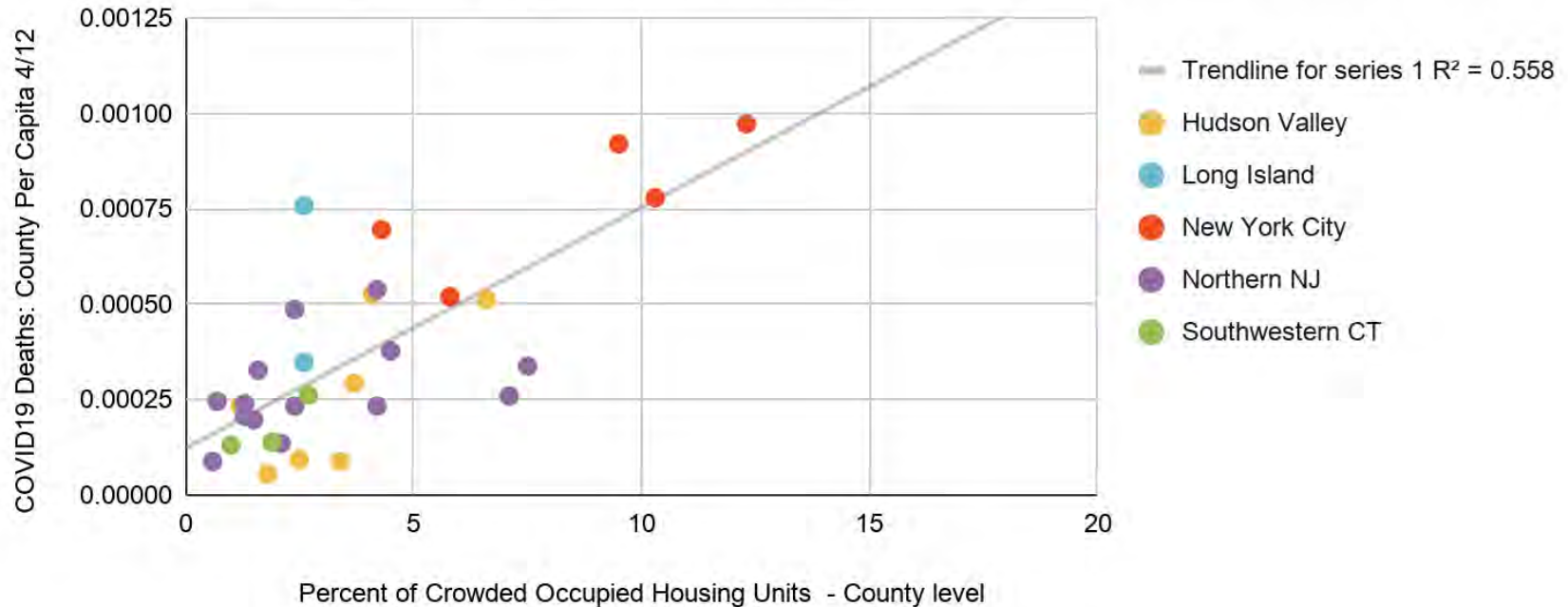
Deaths from state and local level public health agencies via USA FACTS and CDC Social Vulnerability Index



Preliminary Findings: Correlation between COVID-19 Deaths and Housing

Cumulative Deaths Per Capita and Crowded Occupied Housing Units

Deaths from state and local level public health agencies via USA FACTS and CDC Social Vulnerability Index



Who is vulnerable in a health crisis?

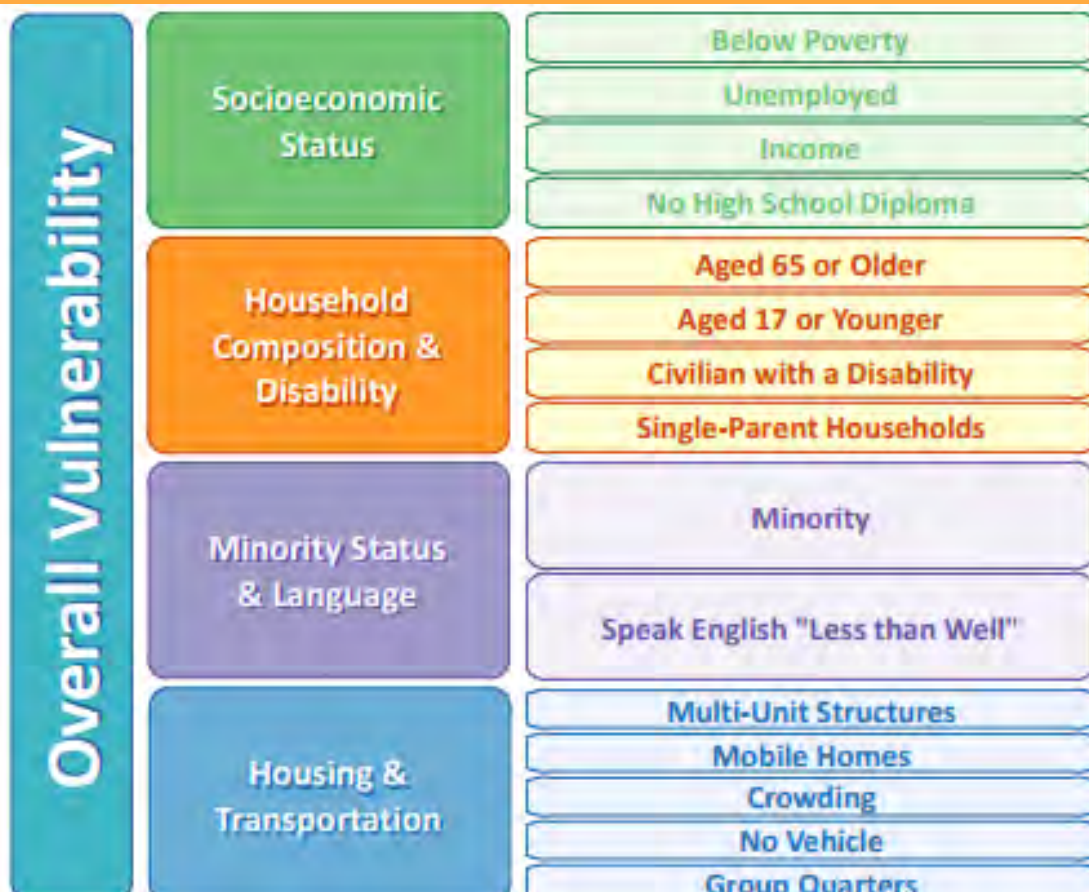
Mapping and Quantifying Population in the Tri-State Area

based on the following:

- Center for Disease Control Social Vulnerability Index
- Population Characteristics
- Health Insurance Coverage
- Population Living in Group Quarters

NOT intended to predict who will get or die from COVID19!

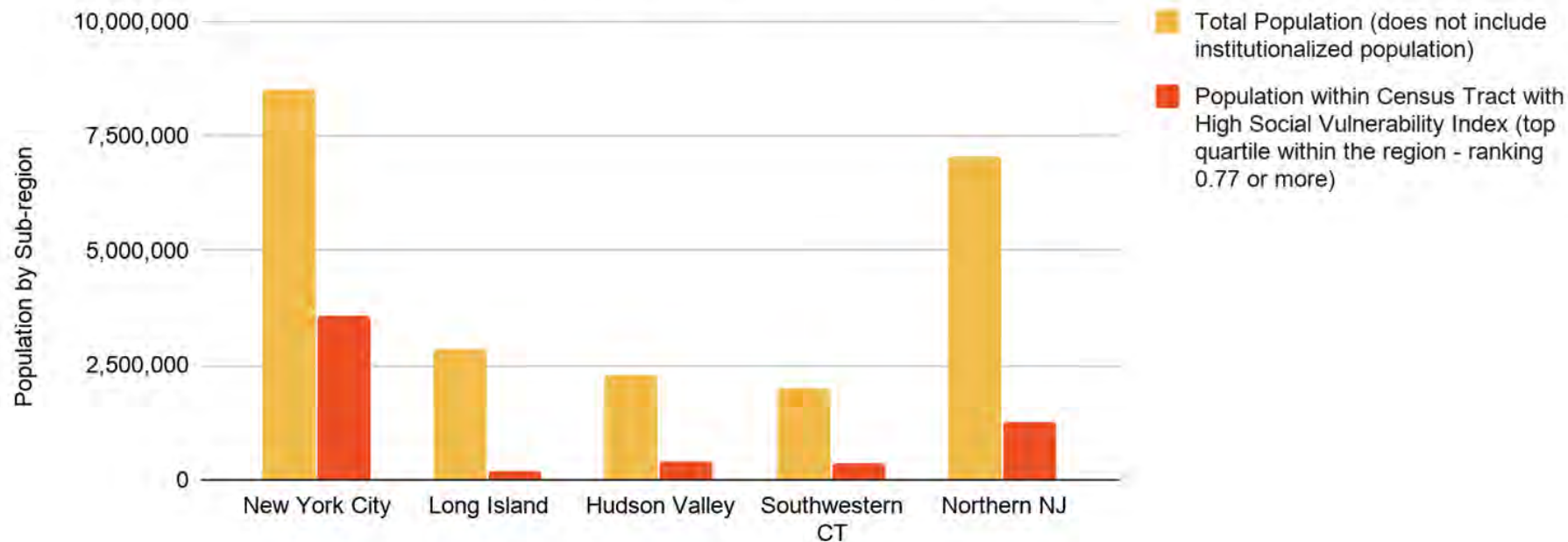
Components of Social Vulnerability Index



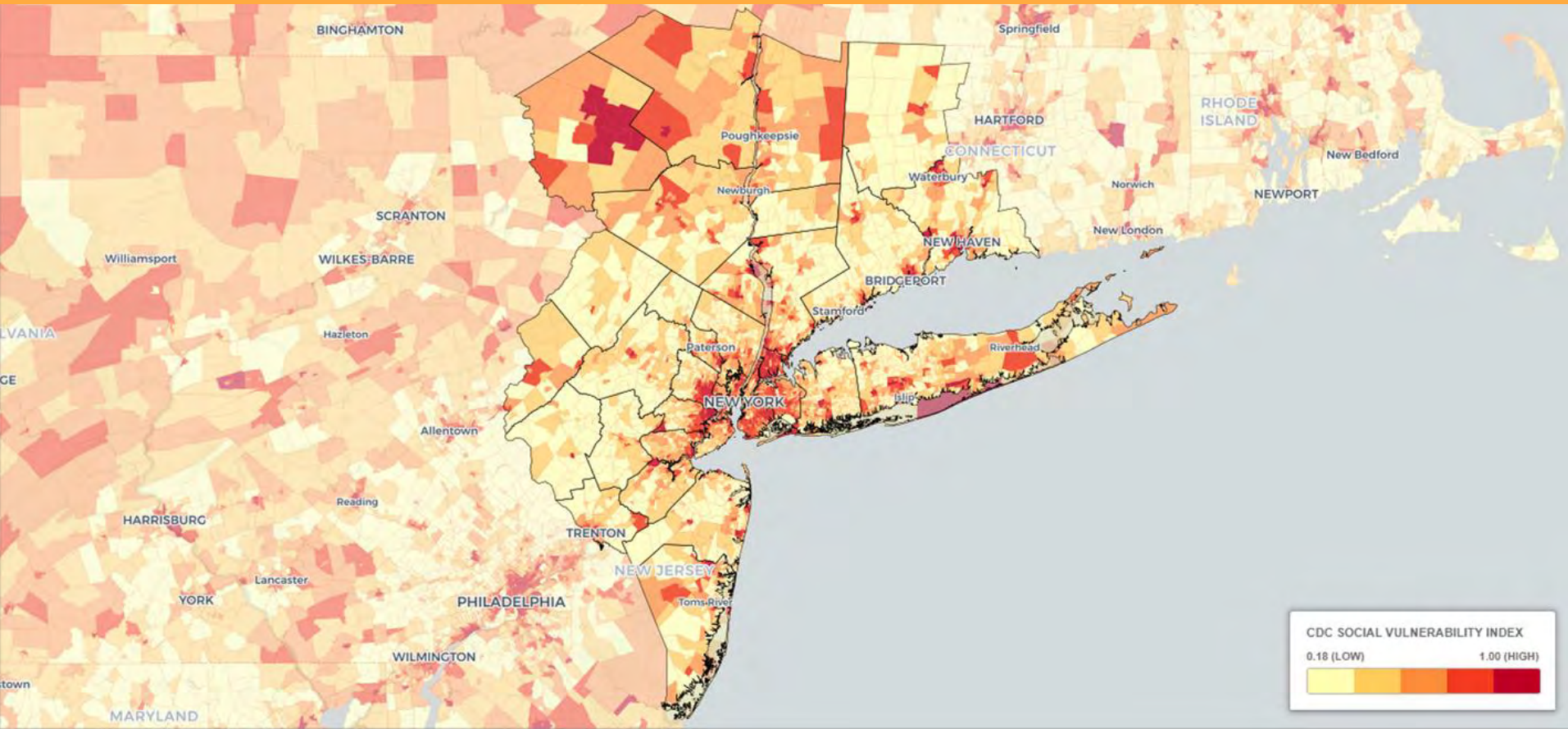
Six million people live in census tracts with High Social Vulnerability by CDC Index

Center for Disease Control: Social Vulnerability Index

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry: Geo-spatial Research Analysis Program



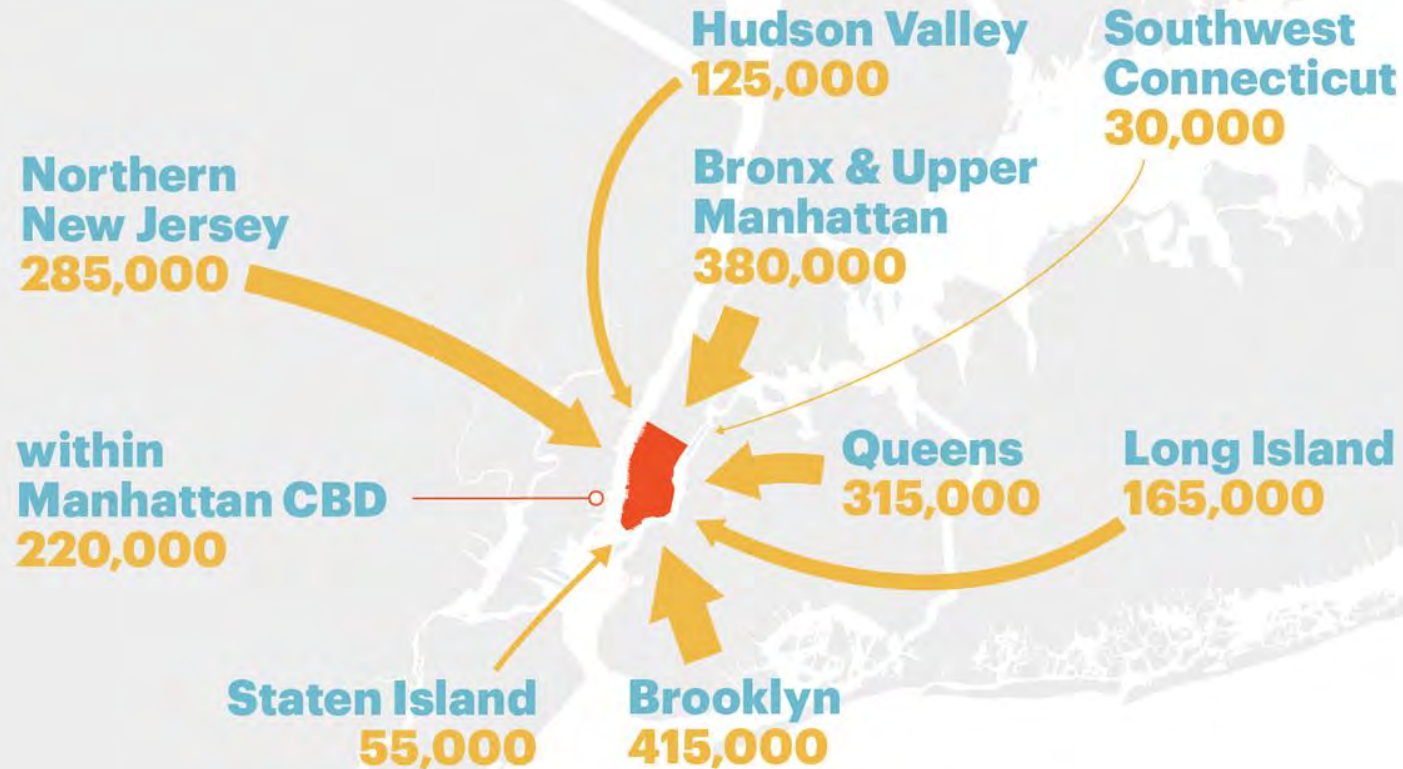
CDC: Social Vulnerability Index



Covid-19: preliminary research in changing travel patterns



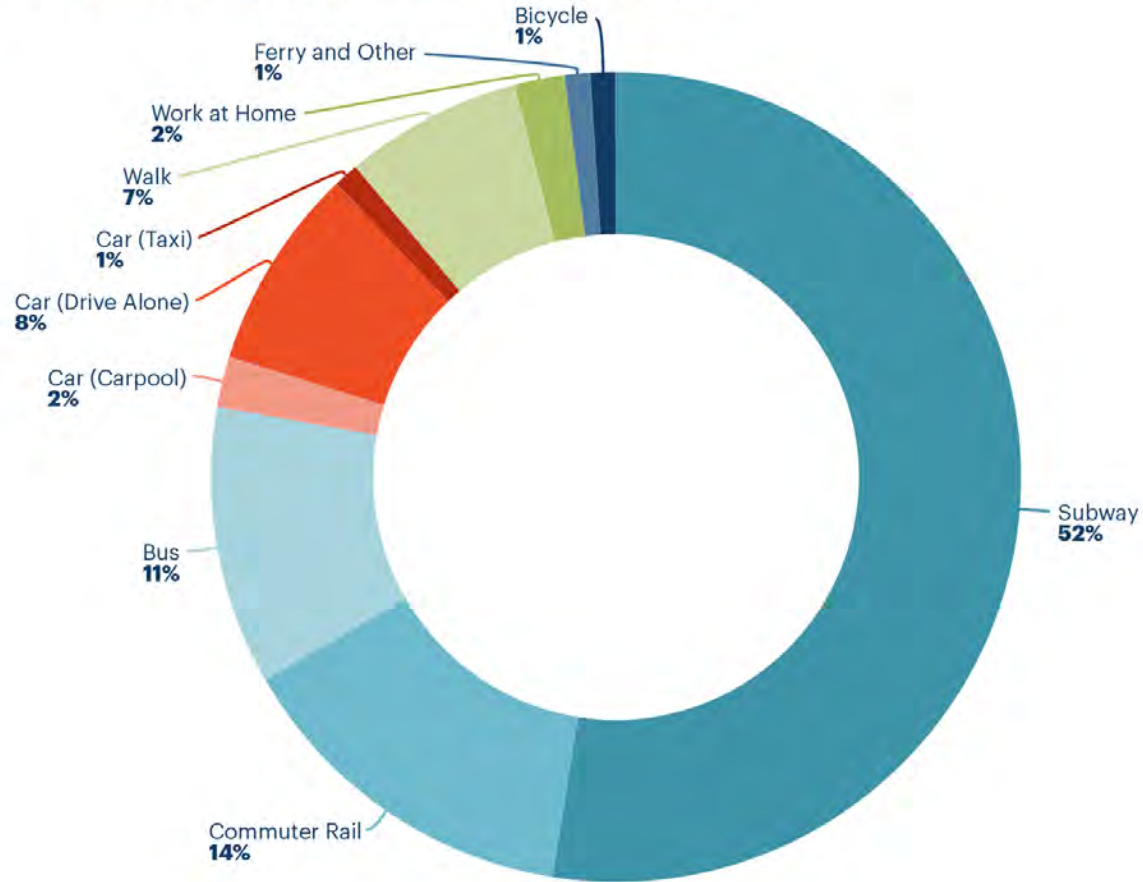
Pre-Covid Work Trips Into Manhattan CBD



An additional 80,000 work in Lower Manhattan and live outside the region

7x more
commuters
to the
Manhattan
CBD take
public transit
than take a
car

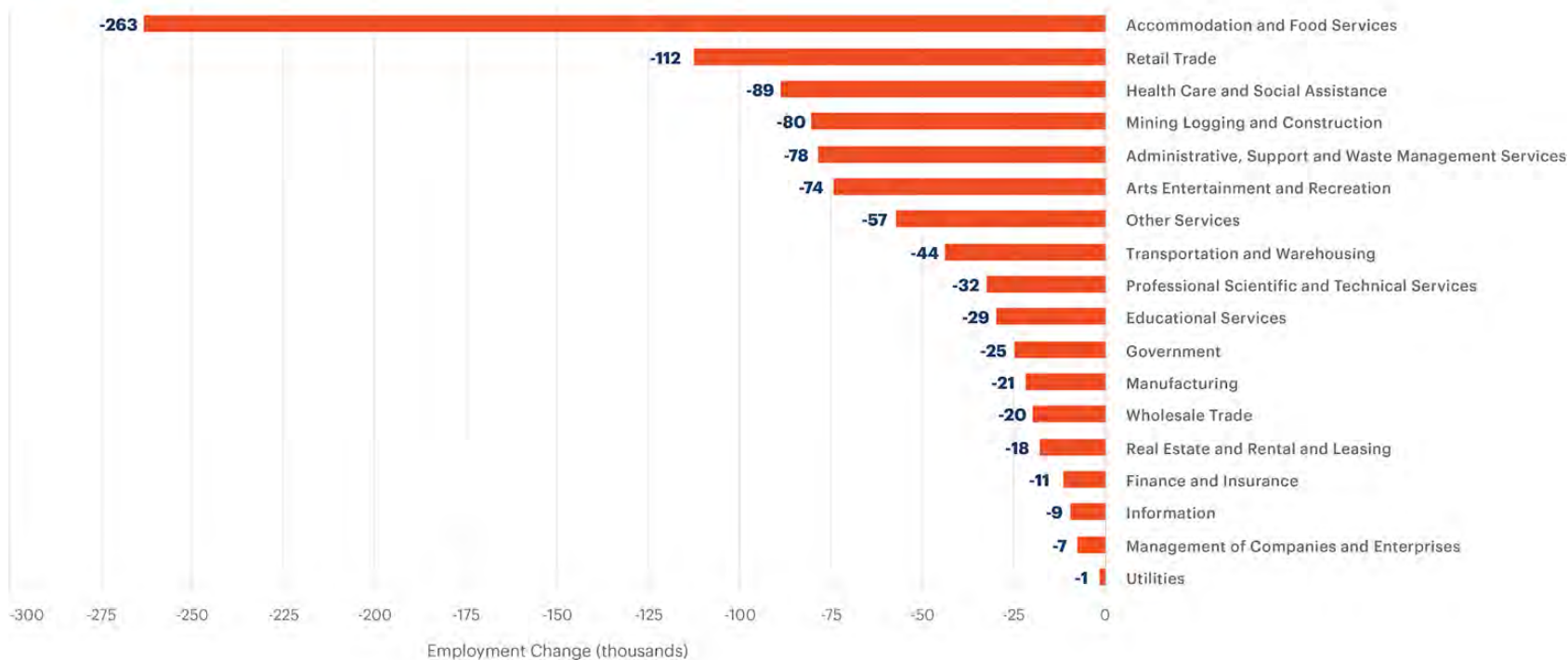
Means of Transportation for Commuters to Manhattan CBD



NYC has lost 26% of its jobs due to the pandemic

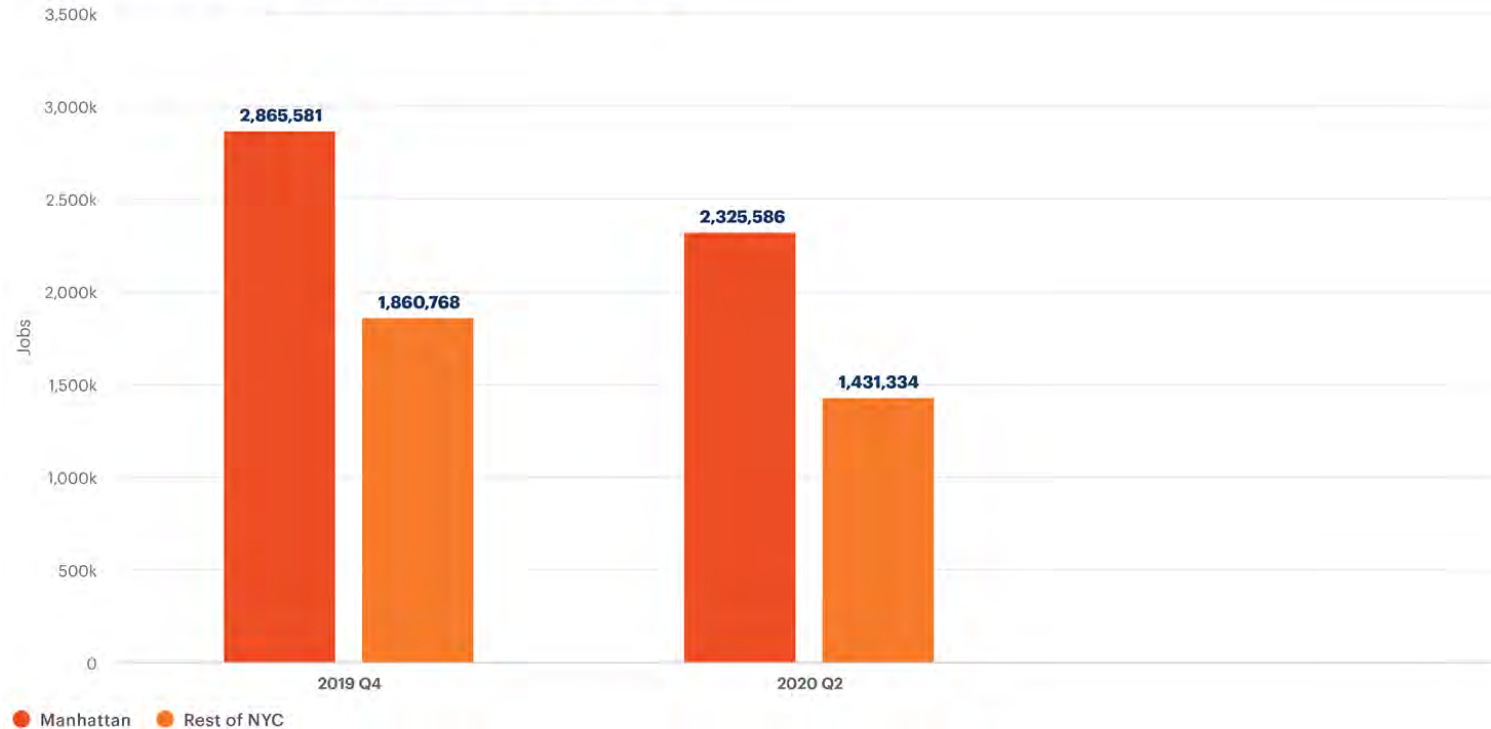
Change in Employment by Industry (thousands), New York City

2019 Q4 to April 2020



How many people will be returning to work?

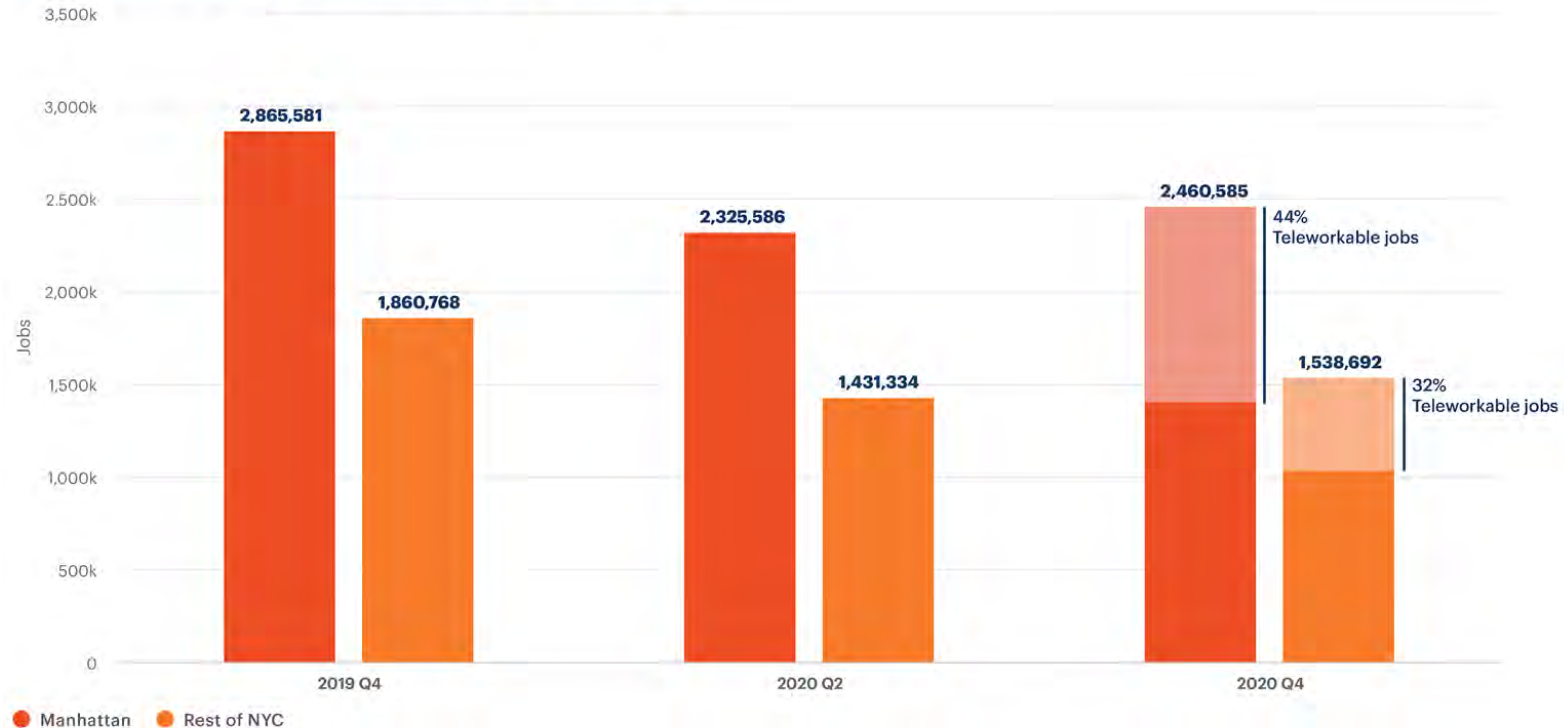
Short-Term Employment Scenario, New York City



Bureau of Labor Statistics. Preliminary estimate based on NYC Independent Budget Office estimates and RPA assumptions.

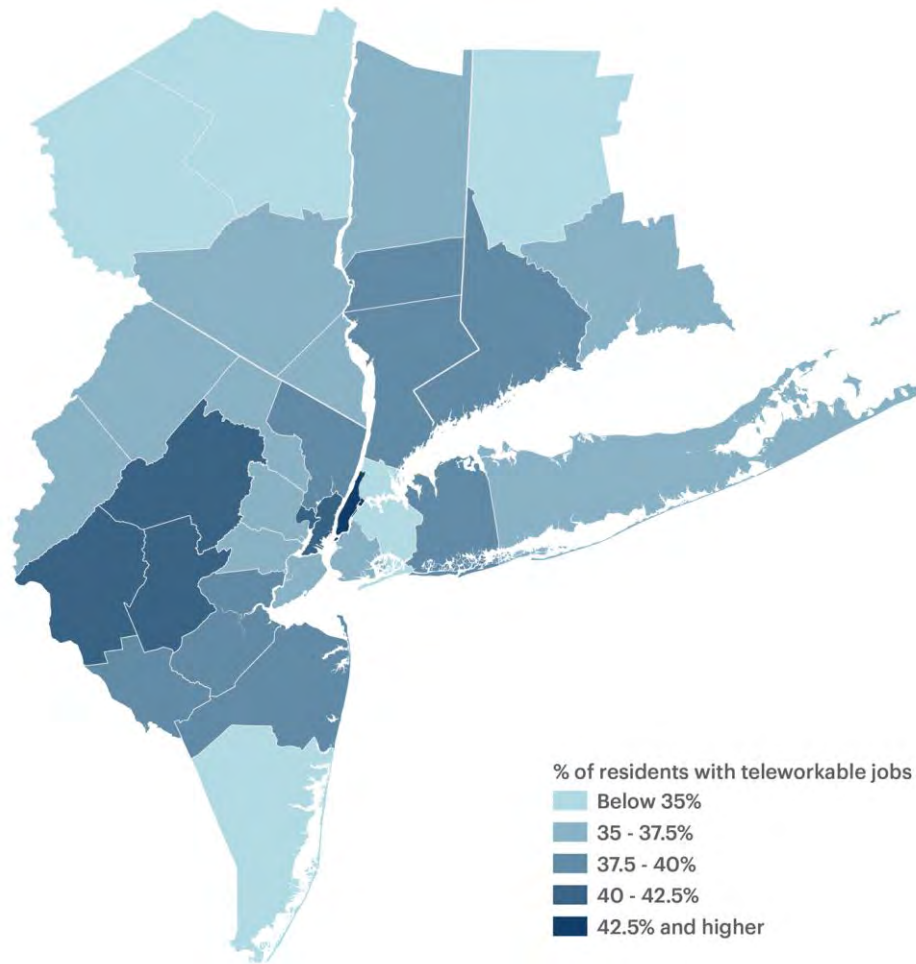
How many will be returning by the end of 2020?

Short-Term Employment Scenario, New York City



Bureau of Labor Statistics. Preliminary estimate based on NYC Independent Budget Office estimates and RPA assumptions.

Some communities are better able to telecommute than others



Research & Preliminary Recommendations

Research

- Determine how many people will be commuting to Manhattan/NYC over time
- Develop scenarios for travel by mode and time of day
- Test impact of policies such as bike lanes, automobile restrictions, busways

Preliminary Recommendations

- Manage traffic congestion: placards, HOV restrictions, congestion pricing
- Increase alternatives to driving: busways, bike lanes

Equity Advocacy & Research

Advocacy

- Public Housing: NYCHA Reform & Funding
- Affordable Housing: *Be My Neighbor*
- Health: Healthy Regions Exchange
- Climate: *Equitable Adaptation*
- Transit: *Essential Service*

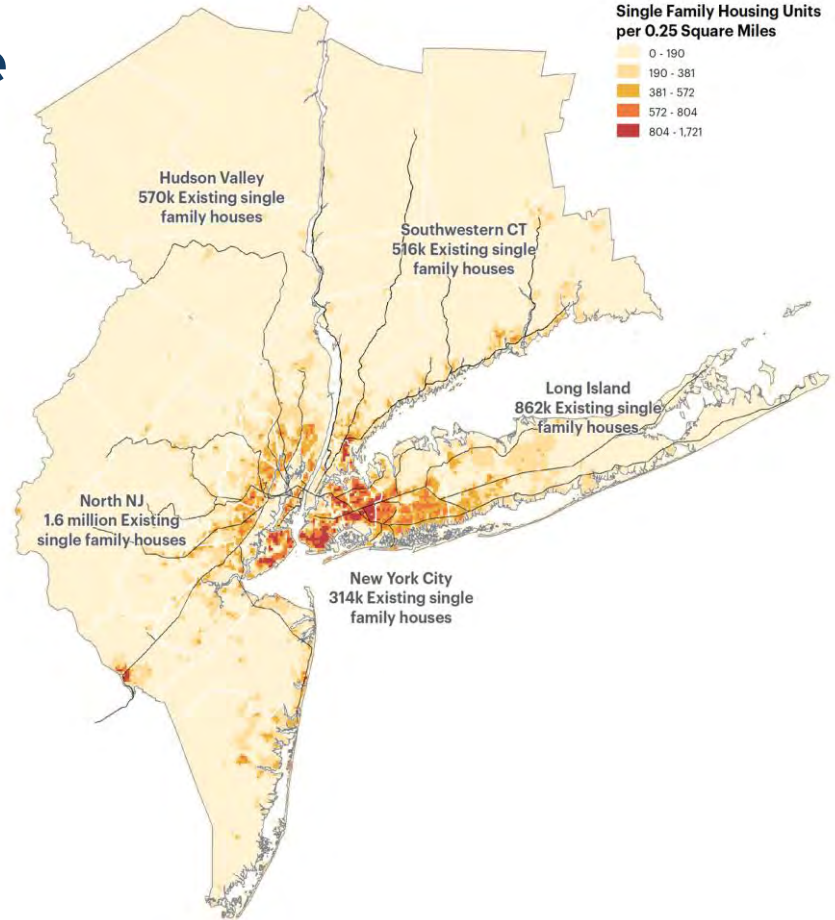
Research

- COVID-19 Impacts
- Cost of Segregation Initiative
- Fairfield County Housing Opportunity research

Be My Neighbor

We can create more than **500,000** new homes in the region

just by allowing accessory dwelling units (ADUs), or allowing conversions of large single-family houses to two- or three-family houses



Be My Neighbor: ADUs and Conversions



DETACHED



ATTACHED



ABOVE GARAGE



INTERIOR (LOWER LEVEL)



INTERIOR (UPPER LEVEL)



GARAGE CONVERSION

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) come in many shapes and styles. Illustrations by RPA, based on AARP's ABCs of ADU's Guide.

Be My Neighbor: Key Recommendations

Regionwide

- Promote ADUs and Conversions through NY, NJ, and CT State Legislation
- Make it Easier to Legalize and Construct ADUs & Conversions through Zoning Changes and Local Ordinances
- Create More Flexible Parking Requirements
- Provide Technical Assistance, Financing, and Information

New York City

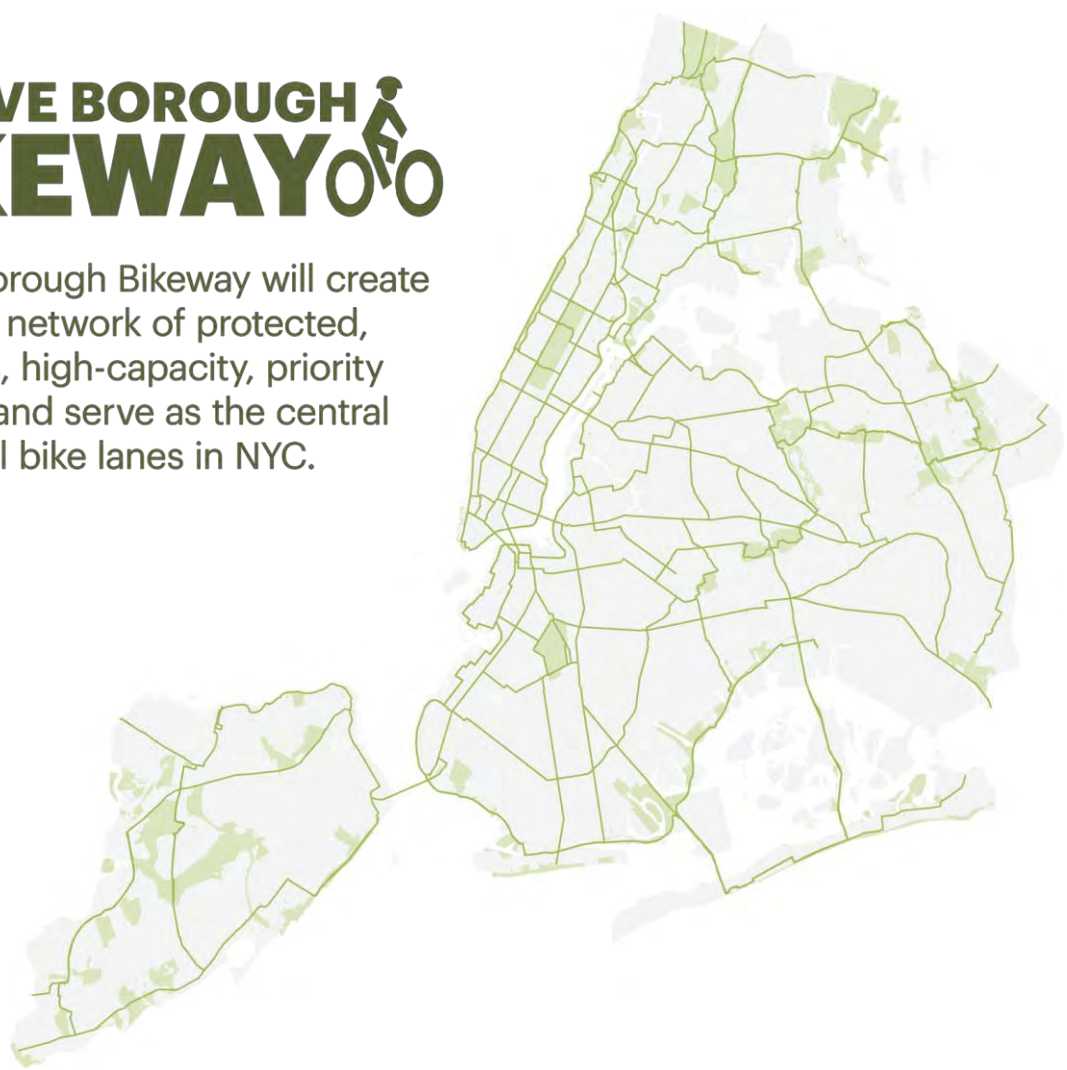
- Reduce Multifamily Consolidations
- Support NYC's Basement Apartment Program Expansion and ADU opportunities
- Rethink Off-Street Parking Requirements for two and three family homes

The Five Borough Bikeway

Critical infrastructure connecting NYC

THE FIVE BOROUGH **BIKEWAY**

The Five Borough Bikeway will create a city-wide network of protected, continuous, high-capacity, priority bike lanes and serve as the central spine for all bike lanes in NYC.



Five Borough Bikeway: Key Takeaways

Bikeway benefits

- Increase in ridership
- Reduction in conflict between bikes, cars, and pedestrians
- Reduction in air pollution while shrinking NYC's carbon footprint
- Reduction in traffic congestion

Getting it built

- Start implementing temporary parts as part of the COVID-19 recovery
- Create a task force to develop a broader citywide vision for the bikeway

Part of a broader public works agenda

- Capital projects will have a game changing effect on cycling rates in the City

Keeping the Transit System Solvent

Transit ridership low

Ridership is down between 90%+ across the region

- MTA down 93-97%
- NJ Transit down 90%+
- CT Transit bus service down only 50%

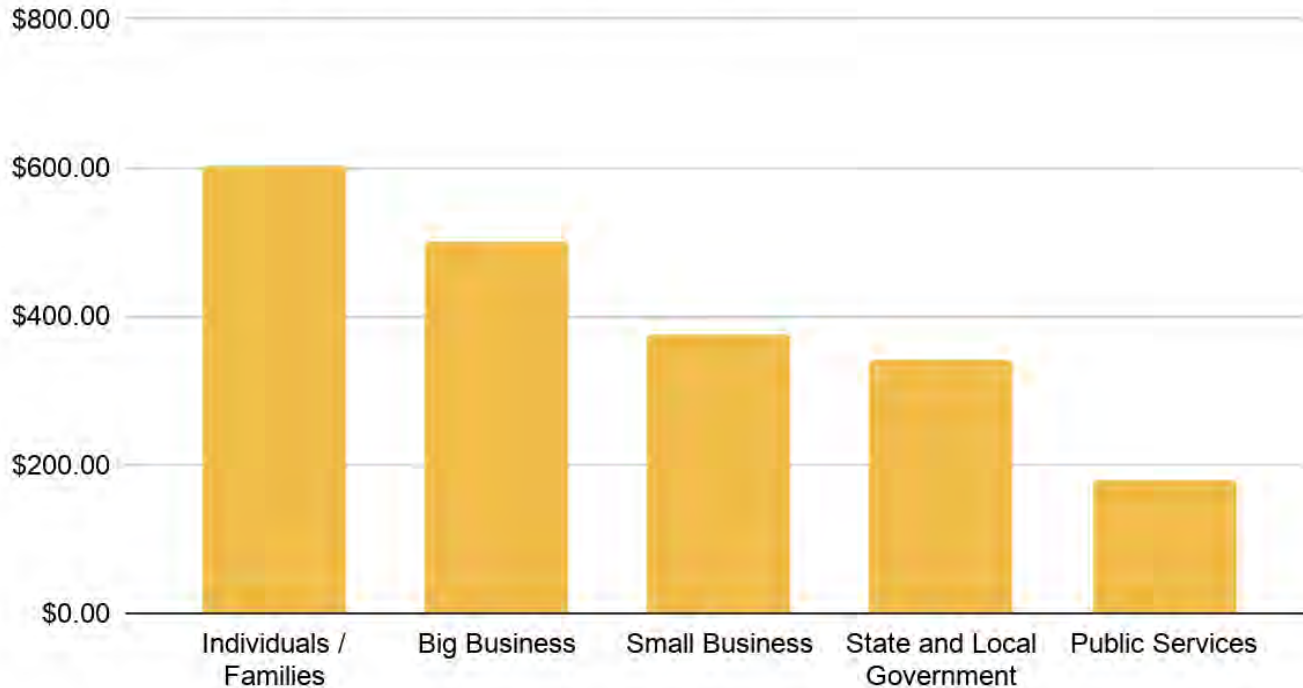
Shows class divides:

Late March, Manhattan subway down 75%, Bronx subway use down 55%

38% of transit ridership on MTA on a regular day is essential workers

Overview of Emergency Aid

Emergency Aid (in billions of dollars)



Advocacy for emergency transit aid

March 23, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
5-230, The Capitol
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
5-221, The Capitol
Washington DC 20510

Cc:
Chairman Mike Crapo, Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
Ranking Member Sherrrod Brown, Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
Chairman Richard Shelby, Senate Committee on Appropriations
Ranking Member Pat Leahy, Senate Committee on Appropriations
Chairman Peter DeFazio, House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure
Ranking Member Sam Graves, House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure
Chairwoman Nita Lowey, House Committee on Appropriations
Ranking Member Kay Granger, House Committee on Appropriations
Members of the Senate
Members of the House

RE: Updated letter with 26 additional signatories

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader McCarthy, and
Minority Leader Schumer:

Due to the economic slowdown brought on by the spread of the novel coronavirus, many
sectors of our economy are in need of financial support. Social distancing and reduced
demand for certain public services are having, and will continue to have, a negative impact
on operating budgets, including public transit.

RPA joined 248 organizations
and transit agencies to co-sign
a letter organized by
Transportation
for America to Congressional
leadership

Led to \$25B in transit aid

Advocacy for emergency transit aid

\$25 Billion in emergency transit aid includes

- \$3.8B for MTA
- \$1.25 for NJ Transit
- \$480M for CT Transit
- \$1 billion for Amtrak
 - \$492 million for Northeast Corridor
 - \$526 million for National network

Most Recent Assessment

Another \$1.2 billion in budget relief is needed for NJ Transit between now and the end of FY 21.

New Jerseyans need NY MTA to receive relief, too, in proportion to its need nationally

Port Authority capital program needs must be included in HEROES Act

