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Commuters Ditched Public Transit for Work From Home. Now There's a Crisis.

- **Without help, agencies warn of higher fares, service cuts**
- **Top transit systems see total \$6.6 billion shortfall by 2026**

The post-pandemic reality for America's public transportation is bleak. Work from home has solidly set in, leaving transit agencies that rely on fare-box revenue facing a fiscal cliff.

As pandemic aid dwindles, the nation's biggest transit systems face a roughly \$6.6 billion shortfall through fiscal year 2026, according to a Bloomberg tally of the top eight US transportation agencies based on passenger trips. Rising labor costs and inflation are hitting as farebox revenue stagnates after ridership collapsed. Those eight agencies serve regions that combined contribute about \$6 trillion annually to the national economy.

Local officials are pressing for help. Last month, the California Transit Association asked the state for \$5.15 billion over the next five fiscal years. Without more money, transit officials across the country warn that the public can expect steep ticket price increases and drastic cuts to train and bus schedules, while long-planned expansion projects are on the chopping block. That pleading worked for New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority when state lawmakers recently approved a massive bailout.

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