



Asking for NYC's \$24 Billion Refund

Posted by [Glenn](#) on April 30, 2006 - 4:28pm in [The Oil Drum: Local](#)

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There's a perception that NYC acts as a leech on the rest of the country and state. I'm not sure where this perception comes from. Maybe they think that we just provide too many expensive social services to an enormous load of welfare cases. I'm not sure why people believe this, but it is simply wrong. In fact it is NYC that provides an enormous surplus to both Albany (\$13 Billion) and Washington (\$11 Billion) ([Gotham Gazette](#)). And that's not including the money that we send to the state and Federal Governments or authorities like the MTA or Port Authority that ends up getting spent on projects that do not align with our local priorities because they are approved without much local input.

If we do try to relocalize our energy, food, transportation, democracy, etc in NYC we will need to rectify these imbalances to make sure that the urban core does not continue to subsidize the suburban and exurban lifestyle.

In every budget discussion of what we can and can not afford to do, the Federal and/or state governments are the elephants (pun intended) in the room. All the projects that we discuss to improve and extend NYC's mass transit infrastructure rely on getting money from the Feds. And systematically we are short changed by the spending formulas that allocate transportation, security, education and other public services mostly because it is far more efficient to provide government services to a densely populated area. It's time we got at least some of our money back and let the rest of the country try to fund their priorities from home.

Here's are 3 ideas of what I would do with some of that \$24 Billion extra yearly budget dollars for NYC to advance a Sustainability agenda:

1. A Transportation Plan that includes a integrated intermodal network of high quality Bus Rapid Transit and/or electric streetcars routes, biking infrastructure (buffered lanes, indoor parking), significant pedestrian improvements, accelerated timeline for Second Ave. Subway, congestion pricing, community parking pricing, a fleet of hybrid electric taxis, rideshare/carpooling incentives, freight rail connections, a network of ferries and surface connections to their terminals. They should establish real goals to reduce the amount of automobile traffic by 30-50% within ten years and increase the amount of biking, walking and mass transit usage.
2. An Energy Plan to reduce NYC's peak demand by at least 20% through a series of incentives for investments in energy efficiency (electrical and heating/cooling) as well as incentives for increasing installation of solar, wind, tidal and other renewable power. The city could also start to experimenting with ways of using geothermal heating/cooling systems.
3. Establish an Agricultural Land Trust: Similar to the watershed area north of the city, NYC could start to buy good agricultural land within 250 miles of the city to prevent suburban sprawl from reducing the amount of land that is currently open space or agricultural land. This could also

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include the conversion of spaces in the city to community gardens, rooftop gardens and greenhouses.

I'm sure I'm only scratching the surface here. Please write in your ideas of what you'd do with NYC's hidden surplus.



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