

PwC Transportation and Infrastructure Forum

February 26, 2026 | Accenture, 395 Ninth Avenue | New York, NY

By Valerie Jimenez

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Executive Summary Overview

The PwC Transportation and Infrastructure Forum convened public-sector leaders and industry professionals to discuss the current state and future direction of transportation and infrastructure delivery across New York City and New York State. The forum highlighted the scale of upcoming capital investments, evolving procurement and delivery strategies, workforce and technology challenges, and the growing importance of flexibility, innovation, and sustainability in delivering complex infrastructure programs.

Discussions reflected a shared recognition that agencies are operating in an environment defined by aging infrastructure, funding constraints, rising complexity, and heightened expectations for transparency, equity and performance. Panelists emphasized that while capital programs are historically large, success will depend less on funding levels alone and more on how projects are planned, procured, designed and delivered.

Moderator Perspective and Regional Context

◆ *Kate Slevin Executive Vice President, Regional Plan Association*

She emphasized the importance of advancing large-scale, cross-borough and cross-jurisdictional transit investments that better connect communities and support long-term economic growth. A central focus was the Interborough Express (IBX), which was discussed as a transformative project linking Brooklyn and Queens while leveraging existing rail corridors. The conversation also explored the potential role of light rail and alternative transit modes in filling connectivity gaps that traditional subway expansion has struggled to address. Slevin underscored the relationship between transportation investment and land use, noting that zoning flexibility and transit-oriented development are critical tools for maximizing the benefits of infrastructure spending. International examples, including London's Elizabeth Line, were referenced as models for how integrated planning, sustained investment, and coordination across agencies can yield significant mobility and economic benefits at a regional scale.

NYC DOT Bridges Program and Capital Delivery Challenges

◆ *Kate DeFazio, PE Assistant Commissioner of Bridges Design and Construction, NYC DOT*

Provided insight into the operational realities of managing one of the nation's largest bridge portfolios. She highlighted that NYC DOT is responsible for approximately 789 bridges, four tunnels, and 53 culverts, many of which are well beyond their original design life. DeFazio discussed the agency's FY2025 program of approximately 185 projects totaling \$450 million, set within the context of a long-term bridge capital program of roughly \$34 billion. Much of this work continues to be delivered through traditional Design-Bid-Build, reflecting both regulatory frameworks and institutional familiarity. A recurring theme in her remarks was resistance to change both internal and external as a significant barrier to adopting new delivery models or technologies. NYC-specific procurement requirements, while designed to ensure accountability, can limit flexibility and slow innovation. She emphasized the need for clear expectations between owners, designers and contractors to improve outcomes. Industry-wide challenges were also highlighted, including aging infrastructure, talent acquisition and retention and the importance of deploying technologies that complement workforce skills rather than replace them. These pressures, she noted, require thoughtful organizational review and a willingness to adapt long-standing practices.

MTA Capital Program and Systemwide Modernization

◆ *Rachel Laiserin Chief of Staff, MTA Construction & Development*

Key initiatives discussed included Communications-Based Train Control (CBTC) installations and significant power substation upgrades, which are essential to increasing system reliability and capacity. Laiserin noted that these investments are not only technical upgrades but foundational changes to how the transit system operates. She highlighted approximately \$4.1 billion in capital savings initiatives launched in 2020, achieved through improved planning, better sequencing of work, and refined contracting strategies. These efforts demonstrate the MTA's focus on delivering projects better, faster, and more efficiently, even as the scale of investment grows. Looking ahead, Laiserin cited anticipated contract awards of approximately \$15.8 billion in 2025 and \$12 billion in 2026, reflecting the sustained pace of capital delivery. Additional discussion covered rolling stock procurement, cyclical investment patterns and efforts to unlock private-sector participation, which she indicated have already been successfully implemented. Transparency and accountability were further supported through the publication of the MTA Capital Program Update website.

NYSDOT Region 11 Delivery and Procurement Flexibility

◆ *Glorimar Reyes, MS, PE Director of Design, Region 11, NYSDOT*

Discussed the complexity of delivering transportation projects in New York City's dense urban environment. Her remarks covered the full project lifecycle, from preliminary and final design through state and local environmental review. Reyes emphasized that NYSDOT is

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increasingly deploying a range of delivery models to match project needs and risk profiles. These include traditional Design–Bid–Build, Design–Build, Best-Value procurement and term agreements, each offering different advantages depending on schedule, complexity and market conditions. Her perspective reinforced the broader forum theme that flexibility in procurement and delivery is becoming essential to meeting ambitious capital goals while navigating regulatory, community and environmental constraints.

NYCEDC Capital Program and Community-Centered Infrastructure

◆ Meredith Simon-Pearson, PE Vice President, Capital Program, NYCEDC

Discussed the agency's portfolio of approximately 110 projects totaling \$3.7 billion, spanning waterfronts, public spaces and major infrastructure assets. She highlighted procurement opportunities and NYCEDC's role as owner's representative for Coney Island projects, underscoring the agency's focus on resilient, community-centered outcomes. Historical context, including references to the legacy of Robert Moses, was used to contrast past infrastructure approaches with today's emphasis on equity, sustainability and community engagement.

Conclusion of Cross-Cutting Themes and Emerging Directions

Across all panelists, there was strong alignment around the need to modernize how transportation and infrastructure projects are delivered in order to meet increasing demands for efficiency, resilience and accountability. Digital delivery and pilot programs were repeatedly cited as critical tools for improving coordination, transparency and the ability to deliver projects on time and on budget. Panelists emphasized that technology should be leveraged strategically to support decision-making, improve inspection and maintenance practices and enhance project performance rather than simply add complexity. Sustainability and circular design principles also emerged as a priority, particularly within NYCEDC projects, reflecting a broader shift toward long-term asset performance, resiliency and responsible material use.

Ongoing state and federal funding uncertainty was noted as a key constraint, driving agencies to seek greater flexibility in contracting and procurement approaches. As a result, alternative delivery methods including CM at Risk, Progressive Design-Build, Best-Value procurement, and public-private partnerships (P3s) are increasingly being deployed, especially for large and complex projects such as mega-infrastructure initiatives. Equity and community considerations were also central to the discussion, with emphasis on expanding disadvantaged business enterprises (DBE) participation, advancing community reconnection initiatives and undertaking major planning studies such as the Cross Bronx Expressway and Route 9A. Finally, panelists highlighted a range of emerging technologies and pilot initiatives, including heated lanes, 100-year life-cycle risk analysis, underwater drones, inspection-based maintenance strategies, CBTC efficiency improvements and enhanced joint utility coordination. All of which point toward a more data-driven, resilient and adaptive future for infrastructure delivery.